

BIBLICALLY BASED EMPLOYMENT SOFT SKILLS AS A BEACON OF HOPE  
FOR SEX WORKERS IN SOUTH ASIA

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JONATHAN MORTON

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To my loving wife and better two-thirds. Thanks for walking with me in this journey.

An additional thanks to those who have invested in me throughout the years and have  
impacted my life in various parts of the world.

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## PREFACE

While serving in South Asia my wife and I had multiple opportunities to engage various individuals, families, and ethnic groups. We also had the privilege to work alongside different local partners who taught us a lot about ministry, the culture and ourselves. The time there was not without seasons of difficulty. However, it was a blessed time. My wife had the opportunity to cultivate a relationship with a local partner and NGO where she was invited to use creative avenues of engagement to speak into the lives of women from various socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds. It was from that relationship along with another partnership, hard work, and our passion to confront the sex-trafficking crisis that this project was birthed.

However, we knew that to confront this challenge effectively we needed the church to take a more decisive role. Along with other creative methods to equip the women to move out of that environment. In addition, it had to be something that was easily transferable so the target groups could understand, others could take it, and easily use it in their context. Third, it had to be something that individuals who served as pastors, lay members or leaders, and those who worked in diverse professional environments could also pick up and use. With that in mind the research and discussions that took place led to the development of this project as an introductory primer that can serve as a launching pad into other decisive projects.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

Sexual exploitation, trafficking and the broader realm of contemporary slavery is a crisis that the church must confront. This project presents broad technical aspects of the crisis followed by a theological framework to approach the discussion. Furthermore, I present a primer training tool that integrates biblically based employment skills that can be utilized to engage sex workers specifically or those in other exploitative environments broadly with hope. A broader step by step framework to exit that environment is beyond the scope of this research. This is meant to provide the church with a tool to begin the process of engagement.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND SETTING OF SEX WORKERS, CONTEMPORARY SLAVERY AND THE DEGRADATION OF WORK IN SOUTH ASIA

#### **Introduction and Defining the Issue**

She had been working in the red-light district for many years in this Asian mega-city. Was this the kind of work that she would be forced to do her whole life? If so, what is the point in going on? She walked to the edge of the cliff at the edge of the red-light district and jumped. This is a story that has been repeated within a particular community and is repeated in other ways in other similar environments. There are multiple issues that lead to the cliff. Economic, social, manipulative, and coercive entities are prevalent in this era of contemporary slavery. This research will focus on items that lead to individuals getting caught in contemporary slavery and other levels of sex work on a macro level and then begin to drill down to those who are trapped in trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation in various places around the world. However, in this conversation one must not forget that sexual exploitation is one aspect of the broader contemporary slavery issue; child soldiers, migrants who are trafficked or who enter trafficking situations, broken families, false opportunities, and those who choose that profession are all aspects of this burgeoning crisis. As the thesis progresses, it will begin to target a group of women in a South Asian city and identify the various circumstances that lead to their current condition. It will also look at how they desire to flourish and potential ways to walk with them as they find hope and identify opportunities to flourish.

The economic reality of many around the world is difficult with the goal just to survive day to day. One must not get overly focused on poverty due to other routes that lead to

trafficking such as corruption, conflict, a decline of borders, ethnic issues, and politics<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, poverty is many times the most prominent cause and will garner a lot of attention here. This reality is prevalent in the developed world but most of the developing world stands face-to-face with this economic reality, “Nearly 1/2 of the world’s population — more than 3 billion people — live on less than \$2.50 a day. More than 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty — less than \$1.25 a day.”<sup>2</sup> With that kind of poverty, one can begin to see how many, if offered or manipulated into thinking that participating as a sex worker could offer them a better life, that temptation could begin to push them in that direction. One also must consider those who are living in even more extreme poverty than the above statistics depict. As many cannot even survive their current level of poverty as the UN report further describes, “1 billion children are living in poverty. According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty.”<sup>3</sup> Poverty is part of the soil that breeds the lifestyle and work that robs these people of opportunity, flourishing and their created purpose but it is not the only factor. Anyone who has been involved, read about, or heard anything related to the plight of trafficking, contemporary slavery or sex work has also, in some capacity, heard about the backdrop of poverty: “The end of slavery cannot wait for the end of poverty, but any realistic strategy of global abolition must involve some elements of targeted poverty alleviation. Yet handouts, like mere emancipation, will drain

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<sup>1</sup> Shelley, Louis. *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*. Cambridge, 2010,37

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development Programme. "Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience." Human Development Report, 2014. Web Accessed July 22, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME). "UNICEF: Committing to Child Survival: A promise renewed." UNICEF, 2014

budgets and not bring long-term freedom to slaves.”<sup>4</sup> That is why a holistic spiritual and economic transformational model is essential to impacting this destructive current that runs through many nations and communities. It is key to understand that it is only part of the soil. There are other avenues that can lead to the traps of contemporary slavery including the overall breakdown of a social system that further contributes to this crisis<sup>5</sup>. One can, also, live in poverty but still have work that is dignified and has purpose. This twisting of opportunity, human flourishing and purpose looks different in various places; from the dishonest Wall Street banker to those who are participating in sexual work in some red-light district, to others who are trapped in generational debt bondage. One must target the economic and deeper psychological and spiritual realities that distorts and have manipulated their idea of work and motivates one to walk to the cliff. That cliff will look different for others. It may not be suicide, but it may be the broken acceptance of a reality that they think that they cannot escape. One must take some time to define the specific manifestations that this thesis will begin to look at as we narrow down to our target sub-group in this community of sex workers.

Before moving any further it is important to dissect the concept of “contemporary slavery” or “human trafficking.” This writing will predominately use the phrase “contemporary slavery” or “sex work”. However, there will be times that modern-day slavery and contemporary slavery will be used interchangeably. In addition, sex work must be understood, in the specific context of this research, as something that occurs within and outside the forced slavery context. Most of the focus of the research targets sex workers who are both forced to work in that

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<sup>4</sup> Skinner, Benjamin E. *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-Day Slavery*. Free Press, 2008,291

<sup>5</sup> Dewey, Susan. *Hollow Bodies: Institutional Responses to Sex Trafficking in Armenia, Bosnia, and India*. Kumarian Press 2008,76

industry or choose to participate. It cannot be looked at as a monolithic idea but takes on many forms around the world. Furthermore, the term “slavery” is used loosely. It is contemporary slavery because it will not have the traditional aspects of slavery that occurred in past centuries. Yes, there are many instances where one sees the brutality and intimidation that characterized pre-modern day slavery but there are differences as Marja Paavilainen states:

Put simply in my view, trafficking in persons can be best understood as a process. Forced labour on the other hand is an outcome, a workplace situation. Some victims end up in forced labour through being trafficked, some through other channels. In East and Southeast Asia, both forced labour and trafficking are intrinsically linked to labour migration, where people move in search of better livelihoods and become tricked and trapped in jobs that they cannot leave.<sup>6</sup>

These differences will better inform the terminology and, more importantly, the actions to combat it. Many times those who go into the anti-trafficking arena may not have an understanding of its forms. Thus, the responses do not match the cultural, social, and economic realities on the ground. In addition, the deeper desires sought out by those individuals are not being met. Therefore, at the outset, it must be clear about what this research aims to understand, engage and transform. There are different descriptions that may be used for the following items but, ultimately, these terms encompass what is commonly understood as some of the various forms of modern-day or contemporary slavery that one would find throughout the world:

**Forced labor exploitation**-imposed by private agents for labour exploitation, including bonded labour, forced domestic work, and work imposed in the context of slavery or vestiges of slavery.

**Forced sexual exploitation of adults**- imposed by private agents for commercial sexual exploitation and all forms of

**Commercial sexual exploitation of children**- This encompasses the use, procuring, or offering of children for prostitution or pornography.

**State-imposed forced labour**- including work exacted by the public authorities, military, or para military, compulsory participation in public works, and forced prison labour.

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<sup>6</sup> M Paavilainen, ‘Towards a Cohesive and Contextualised Response: When is it necessary to distinguish between forced labour, trafficking in persons and slavery?’, Anti-Trafficking Review, issue 5, 2015, 158-161, [www.antitraffickingreview.org](http://www.antitraffickingreview.org)

**Force marriage-** refers to situations where persons, regardless of their age, have been forced to marry without their consent.

The other main concepts of modern slavery are slavery, institutions and practices similar to slavery, and trafficking in persons (often referred to as human trafficking).<sup>7</sup>

There is also the reality that many choose to go into these different forms of modern-day slavery willingly due to social or economic pressures. These people, as will be argued, must not be put into the same category as the above definitions. For those individuals the term ***self-imposed exploitation*** will be applied; which a lot of times takes the form of those who go into prostitution/voluntary sex work or return to that lifestyle willingly after being rescued. As the research looks at the destructive practices of contemporary slavery, its various forms, and the soil by which it grows, one must also consider the reality of self-imposed exploitation. That is not written to demean those individuals but to identify more clearly a section of this subculture. This will pull the reader closer to the concept of work in the context of opportunity, human flourishing, and one's purpose for work that is both self-fulfilling and communally restorative.

### **Forced Labor Exploitation**

Work is something that everyone is designed for and something that everyone does, whether one realizes it or not. Work is integrated within one's life and daily reality. The beggar works as he moves from one place to another to find the most opportune spots to get money. The executive works to expand his firm's bottom line; and the social worker works to assist their clients find better opportunities. By choice or compulsory, work is a part of life. However, with many other aspects of the world, work is another part of reality that has been twisted. People have worked to contribute a lot to the world, but people have also found ways to work against

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<sup>7</sup> Kristine, Lisa. "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery." *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*, 2017, pp. 1–65., doi:10.7312/kara15846-003.

human flourishing. That flourishing rests within opportunity and purpose. When opportunity is not realized, then one may drift to something else. When there is no flourishing in one's work, extrinsically and intrinsically, then one is degraded. When purpose is absent then one is left to a dead routine and approach to work that is a form of degradation. Forced labor exploitation is one of those distortions of labor that has distorted opportunity, flourishing, and purpose. Private agents take advantage of individuals in various situations, "The coercion may take place during the worker's recruitment process to force him or her to accept the job or, once the person is working, to force him or her to do tasks that were not part of what was agreed to at the time of recruitment or to prevent him or her from leaving the job."<sup>8</sup> This coercion distorts opportunity that they had not pursued. This manipulation leads to many issues that lead to the stripping of one's dignity and avenues for flourishing. Forced labor, that is or is not connected to sexual practices, breaks one's dignity. Dignity is based in respect and honoring the other person's freedom to say yes or no. There is no respect when one's freedom is taken away. When these patterns are seen in any community then there will emerge a culture of degradation that leads to several other lifestyle practices and work patterns that will deconstruct families and communities. Many countries utilize forced labor as part of their development capital<sup>9</sup> that their nation deeply depends on. When one does not have opportunity or dignity then purpose is also stripped away. One may make the argument that someone who cleans streets and toilets is not in a dignified, flourishing role; but they are. If they see their work as contributing to their personal and communal flourishing, then, that matches the design of work that one is made for (the thesis

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<sup>8</sup> Lisa Kristine, "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage."16

<sup>9</sup> Louise Shelley, Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective,161

will return later to what ‘our design for work’ means) then, yes, it is dignified. The situation of those in forced labor does not have that dignity and they are robbed of purpose. Meet anyone who struggles with purpose and one will likely meet someone who has a deep sense of discontent.

An important and overwhelming sub-category of forced labor exploitation is debt-bondage. This form of contemporary slavery has the greatest impact on maintaining the generational entrapment of forced labor.<sup>10</sup> It may not be as lucrative as sexual exploitation, but its impact has a significant influence on the communities where it is prevalent. The points that have been made earlier, and which will be made even more-so later, in this research, emphasizes the necessity of real solutions that can spark hope and later undermine these layers of modern slavery.

The reality of forced labor is present in many parts of the world. The number of people in forced labor and the financial gains from it cannot be dismissed. According to the International Labor Organization, there are nearly 21 million victims of forced labor which generates \$150 billion of income annually.<sup>11</sup> But in many ways this is a view into a shadowy black market where one does not fully understand its true economic and political extent. So one must hold onto those numbers loosely. Forced labor is a powerful antagonist to human flourishing that is relentless in its pursuit of more people because of its financial gain. The question is, if the same effort was put into establishing platforms of work that give fair opportunity, encourage human flourishing, which leads to purpose, could it lead to even greater profits? This writer would argue, yes.

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<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Skinner, *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-Day Slavery*, 229

<sup>11</sup> ILO. “Statistics on forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking.” Accessed August 11, 2018. <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/policy-areas/statistics/lang--en/index.htm>

However, the point is that one must realize that in any area of life, unethical behavior produces gains to only a certain point. If so, then one must also understand that the benefits of ethical work, which, ultimately, leads to human flourishing, are part of the human experience that is hindered by unethical behavior, “Without love at the center—that concern for the other—business leaders fall prey to their own self-aggrandizement in a culture that worships wealth. Love eschews envy, boasting, and pride. So should business.”<sup>12</sup> The economies and communities that depend on some extent on forced labor cannot flourish because those who are providing the support for the means to a productive economy are not flourishing. There are more and more extremes that those who instigate forced labor will go to if not checked; and a growing sub-group of people around the world will be trapped with no opportunity, not allowed to flourish, and lacking purpose.

### **Forced Sexual Exploitation of Adults and Children**

Forced labor exploitation is one of other branches of the contemporary slavery dilemma that is the anti-thesis to human flourishing in various parts of the world.

Also, emerging from the reality of contemporary slavery is forced sexual exploitation of adults and children; with women and children experiencing the brunt of the exploitation.

Women and girls accounted for more than 99 per cent of all victims of forced sexual exploitation. More than 70 percent of victims of forced sexual exploitation were in the Asia and the Pacific region, followed by Europe and Central Asia (14 per cent), Africa (8 per cent), the Americas (4 per cent), and the Arab States (1 per cent).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Barnes, Kenneth. *Redeeming Capitalism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2018) Kindle Ebook

<sup>13</sup> Lisa Kristine, “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage.”

With such overwhelming numbers, sexual exploitation has received a lot of the attention around the world and has instigated a lot of momentum for change within the arena of contemporary slavery. Sexual exploitation has generated enormous profits around the world: “The profit numbers in this graph indicate that trafficked sex slaves are by far the most lucrative slaves in the world. Only 4.2 percent of the world’s slaves are trafficked sex slaves, but they generate 39.1 percent of slaveholders’ profits.”<sup>14</sup> Profits that are generated from sexual exploitation cannot be ignored; from those who benefit the most within private entities, both criminal and government sanctioned, and other local authorities. Bribes, intimidation, manipulation, fear, coupled with growing criminal sophistication are all the norm for those who support these activities. Opportunity, human flourishing, and purpose are stripped from those who are forced to participate in this world of sexual exploitation. There are multiple NGOs, private investigators and other groups that have emerged to stem the tide of this growing market. However, there are numerous challenges that continue to serve as obstacles to deal with this destructive issue.

Bribes married to corruption continue to be one of the strongest instigators for the business of sexual exploitation. When a group or NGO desires to go into a community and help those who are trapped in an environment of sexual exploitation and the local authorities turn a blind eye or even assist those who are controlling the business, the options become even more limited to assist those women and children. As in the Eastern European country of Moldova, this corruption has been part of the normal social fabric, “Judges and prosecutors were not the only ones taking bribes in Moldova. The police and border guards also take bribes to allow trafficking

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<sup>14</sup> Kara, Siddharth. *Sex Trafficking: inside the Business of Modern Slavery*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017

to occur in the first place...”<sup>15</sup> Also, in India this pattern is repeated, “In some cases, there are also up-front expenses, such as the large haftas (bribes) that brothel owners in Mumbai must pay when they open a new establishment.”<sup>16</sup> Those are two examples from different parts of the world out of hundreds of others that demonstrate the reality of corruption and bribery that instigates the reality of sexual exploitation. Faced with this problem, opportunity, human flourishing, and purpose will continue to be stifled because those who are supposed to be in place to hold these individuals accountable have turned into the ones who are most supportive of it. Organizations that lobby for justice in the court systems and with the local police authorities must deal with this conundrum. This additional layer of opposition has stymied ongoing strategies. However, this forces one to re-evaluate these strategies and think through what can be done to expand the possibilities for opportunity, flourishing, and purpose. If the government will not help then one must begin to turn to other robust strategies that are undergirded by a recognition of one’s foundational purpose and design of work. This challenge must be answered because in places where sexual exploitation thrives, there is the continued presence of those who have been entrusted to serve and protect<sup>17</sup>, who have chosen, rather, to shut their eyes and benefit from the destruction of some of society’s most vulnerable.

Intimidation, manipulation, and fear are also tools utilized by private criminal entities that maintain the work of sexual exploitation. Those who are brought into the community of forced sexual exploitation usually experience a time of extreme physical and/or sexual abuse in the attempt to break them psychologically and emotionally. This allows for easier control of the

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<sup>15</sup> Siddharth Kara, *Sex Trafficking: inside the Business of Modern Slavery*,126

<sup>16</sup> Siddharth Kara, *Sex Trafficking: inside the Business of Modern Slavery*,205

<sup>17</sup> Louise Shelley, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*,85

victims. They are also burdened with enormous debts that force them to work in this environment for many years to “earn” their freedom. There is also the fear that if they attempt to escape, and fail, then they will be beaten even more to dis-way them from attempting such actions again. Then there is the shame of having to go back home and the likelihood that their community will learn about the work they have been involved in. Colleagues have encountered these realities in one Asian mega-city. There are multiple factors, explicit and subtle, that contribute to the continuation of sexual exploitation in the communities. Poverty is a significant factor but the authorities turning a blind eye and the criminal entities providing the framework for the exploitation through brothels, so-called massage parlors, and other discreet avenues perpetuates the reality of sexual exploitation. There are deep issues that must be addressed moving forward. Every challenge will not have an easy answer and the reality of modern-day slavery has many layers. But the most systemic and lucrative layer of sexual exploitation will garner most of the attention from this project and research. Many of the strategies and solutions that this research will attempt to ascertain and propose, can potentially have an impact on the other areas of sexual exploitation. Unless one confronts the business of sexual exploitation then there is only so much more that can be done to address the other areas:

Of course human trafficking is a difficult and complex problem and solutions at any scale can be fleeting. However, in the same fashion that public health practitioners, climate change advocates and those in other human rights communities are advancing solutions, anti trafficking organizations must move beyond describing the intricacies of the problem to advising, guiding and offering long-term solutions that will end the wholesale practice of human trafficking.<sup>18</sup>

Moving forward into other areas of contemporary slavery one must continue to understand the work that lies ahead. This writing will look at integrated approaches that the

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<sup>18</sup> Newcomb, Randy. “Debate: Lessons Learnt from 10 Years and USD 50 Million of Grant Making to End Human Trafficking.” *Anti-Trafficking Review*, vol.3, 2014, doi: 10.14197/atr.20121438

group is using through the marketplace, technology, and spiritual and psychological transformation to pierce through the stone vail of sexual exploitation. Those involved in this work must seriously think about how to impact this arena. Too many take one small success and mount it as their badge of expertise; this research will try to avoid that mistake.

However, providing real opportunity, that will lead to human flourishing, and purpose will take work and more layers of creativity. Sexual exploitation of women and children, which will be the focus through much of this research, is nothing to just pass over. If this injustice exists anywhere then it is a call to arms for those whose hearts break of stories of 11 year old girls who are taken from their families and put in some house to have sex with 20 men a day while being abused by the area pimp and ignored by the local authorities; or the teenager who is tricked into traveling to some unfamiliar area to take a job but comes to find out that they were manipulated and are now trapped in a business that demands one forgets any possibility for flourishing and purpose. Going in with a sledgehammer may not be the best answer. As those who promote this kind of work use increasingly sophisticated methods to maintain it, others must use sophisticated methods grounded in the recognition of something more profound to combat it.

Many who go into this lifestyle by force or by choice do not believe that they have access to any other kind of opportunity. This misconception is imposed from within and from external forces that desire to keep them trapped in that environment. There are multiple groups who are working to provide opportunities but how does one reach larger portions of the population of those who are trapped in commercial sexual exploitation? The desire here is not to immediately confront the criminal entities and corrupt governments that turn a blind eye but to be bold as well as wise in how to circumvent the commercial sex trade enterprise, while communicating a message of renewal. And, yes, it is an enterprise that produces billions a year. Those who control

it work hard to maintain it. The work of modern-day abolitionists and more specifically the church must be just as focused but more creative. This research will ask questions of those who are in the commercial sex industry and test some tools in an Asian mega-city to ascertain if those tools can spark hope and potentially be viable as an introduction to other development opportunities. It cannot stop there. Opportunity that leads to human flourishing can only lead to purpose if one then walks with those in that industry to understand that their purpose and design from their Creator is to work but not in the destructive arena of commercial sex trade. This will be a greater challenge when engaging those whose condition is self-imposed (which compromises a large portion of those that are directly being engaged). It will be difficult but necessary in order to impact the broader populations of those in this industry, but the efforts and results will not be in vain.

### **State-imposed forced labor**

Another well-documented dynamic of contemporary slavery is state-imposed forced labor. It comes in various forms and is entrenched in various places. Whereas illegal forced sexual exploitation or forced labor exploitation can be confronted through legal means and marketplace strategies, state-imposed forced labor will not be easily rooted out of the contexts where it is most prevalent. A nation that does not see work as a means to human flourishing coupled with fair opportunities and purpose will not give up what they feel is an easy method of obtaining labor for their own economic needs. According to the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery report state-imposed slavery exists but not to the extent as other forms of forced labour: An estimated 4 million people were in State-Imposed Forced Labour at any given point in time in 2016...Of the total number of people in state-imposed labour, the majority (64 per cent) were forced by their government to work for the purpose of furthering economic development. However, while the overall number and percentage appears high, only a few States actually

resort to this kind of forced development work. Fifteen per cent of those in state-imposed forced labour were subjected to abuse of conscription and 14 per cent were forced to carry out prison labour under conditions that violate the pertinent ILO standards. The remaining 8 per cent were either forced to perform work of services going beyond normal civil obligations.<sup>19</sup>

Comparatively, state imposed forced labor is not as extensive as other forms of forced labor but the reality is that any place that fosters forced labor, in any form, is a challenge to human flourishing. According to the 2016 statistics 4 million people are being exploited by a governmental state; that is not something to be ignored. There is a snowball effect whenever injustice is accepted. States that allow forced labor will also turn a blind eye to other injustice practices. Because a worldview that dismisses the need for a people, no matter the size of the group, to have opportunity, leading to human flourishing and purpose are destined to perpetuate other layers of human degradation. The forms of state-imposed forced labor vary. Sometimes that forced labor may be in partnership with private entities, which opens other doors of ethical debate. Even though the data is not as extensive as in other areas, the reality is that these activities exist at various levels.

Confronting state-imposed forced labor is a complex issue that cannot be easily challenged. Dealing with a state directed and sponsored forced labor environment is not something that can occur through a single NGO or business. States that forcefully mobilize its people into work that can be degrading, that they argue is beneficial for their country, will not be taken down by a simple protest. This is where the value of a true market-based strategy, that is being proposed as one tool for combating forced sexual exploitation, can be a significant benefit. A strategy and perspective that helps those in leadership see the potential of those in their

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<sup>19</sup> Lisa Kristine, “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage.”

population who are in forced labor, as well as the intrinsic and extrinsic value of dignified work then there can be a transformative effect on the development of their country.

## Migration

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen the on-set of a new wave of immigration. Motivated by the pursuit of greater opportunities for themselves or families to flourish, many have sought open doors to enter developed nations from areas of poverty and war<sup>20</sup>. Migration has been a reality for the world throughout history. According to the International Organization for Migration, as of 2017, there were 258 million international migrants<sup>21</sup>. With migration comes changing demographics and various other social, economic, and political transformations. However, migration also opens the door for malicious actors to manipulate and take advantage of those seeking better opportunities to flourish. Migration has indirectly influenced the international arena of modern-day slavery in various ways:

“Although most migration is voluntary and has a positive impact on individuals and societies, migration, can increase vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation. Irregular migrants, for instance, may be subjected to kidnap and ransom demands, extortion, physical violence, sexual abuse, and trafficking in persons. They may start their journeys by willingly placing themselves in the hands of smugglers and become trafficked along the way. Once they reach their destination, migrants who have travelled through regular and irregular channels remain vulnerable to trafficking in persons and other forms of exploitation due to language barriers, challenges of social integration, and unscrupulous employers....”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Susan Dewey, Hollow Bodies: Institutional Responses to Sex Trafficking in America, Bosnia and India, 175

<sup>21</sup> IOM. “Global Migration Trends.” [www.iom.int/global-migration-trends](http://www.iom.int/global-migration-trends). (Web Accessed September 22, 2019)

<sup>22</sup> Lisa Kristine, “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage.”

The challenge of providing real opportunities for migrants is being met more by criminal entities than those who could possibly provide even greater opportunities for those who are coming into unfamiliar areas. One must be careful to place a value judgment on anyone by saying that ‘you have to do something.’ However, if one is motivated by the golden rule, and the call to love our neighbor as our self, then the migrant turns into a target for our efforts of love instead of simply someone else’s problem. Whenever one chooses not to show love in any arena, especially economics, than those who desire selfish benefits at the cost of others will begin to have a bigger influence than those who desire to flourish.

Migration touches on many areas of society where it has become more prevalent. There are many debates surrounding it with legitimate concerns on all sides. However, the reality is that the migration of peoples will continue no matter what obstacles one attempts to establish, or think should be established. One must be creative in the approach to combat forced sexual exploitation and the broader umbrella of trafficking, “Because of the complex nature of human trafficking, though, efforts to counter it require engagement by many branches of the public private, and civil society sectors”<sup>23</sup>. One also must have a creative marketplace approach coupled with a theology of work that empowers them to step out of the dark into lives and opportunities that lead to flourishing and purpose.

What one should not do is allow opportunity to be wasted by allowing people who have been uniquely designed and who are capable of contributing to society to be placed into massive communities of shacks and tents; making them easy targets for unethical entities. All the while those in international organizations and NGOs scramble to ascertain ways to provide for their

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<sup>23</sup> Foot, Kristen. *Collaborating Against Human Trafficking: Cross-Sector Challenges and Practices*. London: Rowan & Littlefield 2016,14

support. A true marketplace strategy that desires human flourishing would identify those individuals and families and then mobilize them to contribute to their new communities and nations. Paavilainen states, from the Asian context:

“In my view *prevention* of forced labour, trafficking in persons and slavery requires a coherent ‘labour approach’. This is because of the joint root causes and the strong labour market character of these forms of coercion in East and Southeast Asia. In this context, such an approach involves, among others, promoting safe labour migration and improving labour protection in migrant-dominated economic sectors.”<sup>24</sup>

Criminal entities are being creative in their approach. They take advantage of the desperation of those in poverty or warzones for their own ends. What will it take for those who want to put a real dent in the system of modern-day slavery to be more forward looking and wiser than those who see migrants and others as objects for abuse and political fodder rather than people deserving of the opportunity to flourish?

### **Forced Marriage**

Marriage, like other areas of life, is another area that has been twisted by various entities for selfish gains rather than as a tool for human flourishing. There can be no denying that forced marriage can be detrimental to individuals. Whatever is detrimental to an individual is detrimental to a community and negates human flourishing. When marriage turns from sacrificial love to a mechanism of abuse and manipulation than it is no longer the sacred union that it was designed to be: “In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes

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<sup>24</sup> Paavilainen, Marja. “Towards a Cohesive and Contextualised Response: When Is It Necessary to Distinguish between Forced Labour, Trafficking in Persons and Slavery?” Anti-Trafficking Review, no. 5 (2015), doi:1014197/atr.201215512

it....”<sup>25</sup> There are cultural issues that are sometimes involved with forced marriages including other financial obligations that may lead to these decisions. However, forced marriage is recognized as a gateway into other problems:

Once forced to marry, many victims are placed at greater risk of being subjected to other forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and other forms of forced labour. Children are especially vulnerable in these situations. An estimated 15.4 million people were living in situations of forced marriage in 2016.<sup>26</sup>

Marriage in many parts of the world, including developed countries, have turned into something that is simply a tool for one person to get what they want or satisfy some temporal desire which in many cases creates generational patterns of degradation and abuse. In addition, as Kristine in the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery states, nearly 16 million people are in forced marriages around the world. Forced marriages like other descriptions of modern-day slavery have existed before the on-set of the unique aspects that now define contemporary slavery. However, now the nefarious benefits of forced marriage have increased due to globalization, conflict and other forms of trafficking<sup>27</sup>. A holistic approach that engages modern day slavery must also include tackling forced marriages. Due to deeply engrained cultural issues that exist with forced marriages, providing economic and educational opportunities may not be enough. One must look more deeply at the internal driving forces of forced marriages, state-imposed forced labor, sexual exploitation, and forced labor in order to identify not only the external methods to combat those aspects of modern day slavery but also the internal stimuli that spurs it along.

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<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 5:28-29

<sup>26</sup> Lisa Kristine, “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage”, 43

<sup>27</sup> Erickson, Amanda, Carolyn Van Houten and MaryAnne Golon. “Child Bride Survivors of Boko Haram share their horrific stories and urge lawmakers to rescue others.” March 23, 2018

### **Self-Imposed exploitation**

An overlooked reality of commercial sexual exploitation is what this research will term self-imposed exploitation. Trafficking, forced labor, forced sexual exploitation, etc. are all realities that must be addressed. Those are also the areas that garner most of the attention from NGOs, charities, government initiatives, and others who seek to minimize the impact and reality of sexual exploitation. However, there are large segments of those social groups who are in this environment who willingly go into this lifestyle. This research is not minimizing the reality or the fact that sex trafficking is a horrendous reality that must be faced head on. As one deals with the intrinsic motivations of those who instigate sexual exploitation (criminal entities, traffickers, madams, pimps, etc.) one must also engage those who see it as the only legitimate avenue for financial empowerment. Once again, the intention is not to demean these individuals but also target the intrinsic desires of those who are in the category of self-imposed exploitation. Then one can then begin to filter into the other areas of sex trafficking while developing solutions.

Thus far the macro areas of modern-day/contemporary slavery have been addressed to a fair extent. Continuing forward the focus will be to address the most lucrative areas of modern-day slavery, forced-sexual exploitation of adults and children and the current topic of self-imposed sexual exploitation. As stated, self-imposed sexual exploitation does not get a lot of attention when it comes to fundraisers and anecdotes. But it must not be ignored. Those who willingly go into environments of exploitation are still being exploited. The percentages are not something that can be dismissed; as a March 2012 Indian survey states: A recent study of over 3000 female and 1300 male sex workers in India found that most females entering sex work did

so independently.<sup>28</sup> If this is the case, what drives them into this environment? Poverty is one of the main provocateurs. It drives many people to do many acts that one may consider unethical. Some would argue that the means, whether prostitution, theft, or other actions justify the goal of survival. Self-imposed sexual exploitation is a means that many have resorted to, to support themselves and/or families. When in all actuality the effect is detrimental to the individual and community. It is also true that many who are rescued from those situations of bondage in contemporary slavery return to it. Their reasons may be varied but one must recognize that efforts have to go further than a nice statistical report of helping someone out of that environment without acknowledging the truth and circumstances that push them back into those situations:

“In brothels in India, the Netherlands, and the United Arab Emirates, I found women in similar situation. Some had been freed in police raids, or escaped after having been trafficked initially. Many reentered prostitution. A few reentered slavery...Slavery is a situation that inspires its sufferers to justify it in order to explain their own existence.”<sup>29</sup>

No one is created for slavery, exploitation, and degradation at the hands of an immoral fallen world system. Unfortunately, by choice or by force, that is the circumstance that many find themselves. For those who have matriculated in an environment where starvation, fear, and basic survival is not an immediate concern, then it is difficult to grasp the complexities of their situation. This research focuses on a group of exploited women who want a different life and would take a new opportunity in a heartbeat if it was presented. However, there is a two-layered veil that prevents them; external and intrinsic. Thus far the writing has touched on some of the

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<sup>28</sup> R. Sahni and V Shankar, The First Pan-India Survey of Sex Workers: A summary of preliminary findings, retrieved 1 September 2018, <http://sangram.orgDownload/Pan-India-Survey-of-Sex-workers.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin Skinner, *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-Day Slavery*, 159

external realities that drives many to this lifestyle such as poverty. But there are also family pressures where some girls will enter this lifestyle as an only means to provide for their parents and family; as in Thailand for example:

Specific cultures factors also ensnare victims into extended sex slavery. Parents often send young Thai women to work in the entertainment industry to earn money to provide for them into old age...Thai culture, bhun kun, inculcates the youngest daughter with a duty to provide material support to aging parents.<sup>30</sup>

With this cultural dynamic, coupled with poverty and lack of opportunities, many Thai girls forfeit other possibilities by going as far as to explain their profession in a way that is not only transactional but relational to lessen the stigma of the work<sup>31</sup>. But once again this writer's personal bias bleeds through a little, from a simple social-cultural perspective because this writer's experience does not match their situation much less their pressures. But there is no denying the negative effects that those choices lead to. There is the responsibility to look at the market forces or, lack thereof, that motivate these individuals to enter that lifestyle. Religious entities and NGOs have worked to engage local and national governments, set up charitable platforms<sup>32</sup> and businesses have sought to invest in areas that will, in-turn, attack the various levels of poverty that influence one to choose self-imposed sexual exploitation. There has been movement to remedy the situations that leads to sexual exploitation. More specifically, there have been activities that have seen fruit. First, providing skill training for those who are at risk or in that industry has opened doors for more opportunities that lead to human flourishing and

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<sup>30</sup> Siddharth Kara, *Sex Trafficking: inside the Business of Modern Slavery*, 15

<sup>31</sup> Montgomery, Heather. *Modern Babylon? Prostituting Children in Thailand*. Oxford: Berghahn Books 2001,96

<sup>32</sup> Grant, Beth and David Grant. *Beyond the Soiled Curtain- Project Rescue's Fight for the Victims of the Sex-Slave Industry*. Onward Books, 2008

purpose. Also, providing educational opportunities for the children of those families or single women can help the following generation to obtain better opportunities to flourish in their environments or help their families to flourish. All these items are significant in combating poverty and other external factors that lead to human suffering. More significant marketplace strategies need to be developed to specifically target those in all levels of commercial sexual exploitation not just the strategies that focus on rescue and rehabilitation.<sup>33</sup> It must not be a stand-alone effort. For a transformative market-place strategy to be truly effective one also must target the more intrinsic pulls towards sexual exploitation by those who are the abused objects and those who control the objects.

A theology of work must be communicated to those who are in the industry of sexual exploitation. It can be beneficial, to an extent, but it is not enough to simply tell those who are involved in these activities that what they are doing is unhealthy and destructive. Many recognize that fact but ignore it due to the financial benefit and/or the circumstances that they are currently in that prevent them from stepping out of it. Effective strategies, new or pre-established, must be based on a clear perspective that communicates why the industry of sexual exploitation is ineffective for individual flourishing and holistic community development that can provide opportunity, broad human flourishing, and purpose.

From an unapologetic Christian worldview one can state clearly that everyone is created to work.<sup>34</sup> From the very beginning man has been created in the image of God<sup>35</sup> to flourish and

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<sup>33</sup> Ahmed, Aziza, and Meena Seshu. ““We have the Right Not to Be ‘Rescued’....”\*: When Anti-Trafficking Programmes Undermine the Health and Well-Being of Sex Workers.” *Anti-Trafficking Review*, no. 4 (June 2012). doi: 10.14197/atr.201219

<sup>34</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>35</sup> Genesis 1:26

have purpose in work. All that is good and beautiful comes from the Creator who shaped men and women and designed them from the very beginning. Those who have been sucked into the darkest arenas of sexual exploitation and other forms of contemporary slavery are designed in the image of God. That is where opportunity begins. That opportunity is both intrinsic and external. Externally, if all that is good in this world can ultimately be traced to the creator who created people to flourish, as Genesis 1:28 says, then every effort by every NGO, religious entity, government, or caring individual is rooted in the One who is perfectly benevolent. He desires that all have life and have it to the full.<sup>36</sup> He uses even those who do not acknowledge His Presence for His purposes to bring good to individuals and communities. One can see that externally even governments are established for the good of people.<sup>37</sup> There are governments that instigate injustice such as those who perpetuate various forms of modern-day slavery. But those who pursue the good and are motivated by ethical behavior is sourced in something that is otherworldly. In this world there is something amiss. One can see that fact in every facet of life, especially their work<sup>38</sup> which has been distorted by the fall when every human and the very creation<sup>39</sup> was put under a curse due to rebellion and sin. There are many worldviews that try to explain the ugly situation this world is in. But to explain the bad one must have some perspective of the good. There must be a good that exists that is outside of people and completely independent from what their natural senses can grasp; that which is perfectly good and has no dependence on that which is fallen and distorted. The external reality of poverty forced labor

<sup>36</sup> John 10:10

<sup>37</sup> Romans 13:3-4

<sup>38</sup> Genesis 3:14-19

<sup>39</sup> Romans 8:22-24

exploitation, and specifically commercial sexual exploitation cannot be disregarded; and its influence must be confronted.

A theology of work for those in commercial sex-trafficking must first recognize the necessity of opportunity that is both external and intrinsic. Furthermore, that theological perspective must drive one to the good. Any external opportunity that perpetuates something that is not beneficial for those in this industry, which is defined here as the activities involved in the work and the activities that lead to any kind of financial benefit (the ends do not justify the means), must be eliminated as a possibility. What is defined as good leads to human flourishing that does not degrade individuals. This may be considered an easy assumption for those who are the objects and victims of commercial sexual exploitation, but this must also be directed at those who pay the money for those activities and towards those who control the industry at various levels. It may have its roots in the black market, but commercial sexual exploitation is very much a part of the international marketplace due to the enormous profits it generates. A counter to that market along with other forms of modern slavery is needed to impact it for the good. As the thesis progresses it will move to further define these items, where these problems are prominent and what the church is doing in the face of these situations.

### **Where is the problem most prominent?**

One could simply say that forms of trafficking are present in every region of the world and be correct with that simple assessment. There are not distinctions between more affluent nations and those with lower GDP and higher scales of poverty; its presence cannot be ignored by any community. This section will look at five international regions: Africa, Americas, Arab States, Asia & the Pacific, and Europe & Central Asia. This section will rely heavily on the

Global Slavery Index<sup>40</sup> for the subsequent percentages. Up until this point this research has looked at and defined multiple categories of human trafficking or contemporary slavery. In this case the scope will only pinpoint two areas, Forced Labour and Forced Marriage, that the Global Slavery Index identifies; which will give a portrait of how various areas stack up against one another.

First, Africa has an estimate of 9,240,000 persons in either forced labour or forced marriage. 66% are currently in forced labour but 33% are in forced marriage. Before going any further, there are worthy questions that involve cultural norms, social/familial pressures, and/or poverty that leads to one being in these positions. However, that does not dismiss the reality that someone is being forced into a role that they did not choose for themselves. In the Americas there are a total number of 1,950,000 individuals, in the above-mentioned categories. Of that number 66% are in forced labour and 34% are in forced marriage. There is a variable that must be explored which may be affecting these percentages in the US, as in other places, which is immigration. The current data does not pinpoint anything significant now, nor will this research explore that layer at this time. But migration is a variable that cannot be ignored by those who want true marketplace strategies to impact this arena.

The Arab states are the next region. They have a total of approximately 520,000 in those two areas of forced labour and forced marriage. 67% of individuals in that group are in forced labour and 33% in forced marriage. In Europe and Central Asia the totals go to about 3, 590,999 with 91% involved in some form of forced labour and 34% in forced marriage. Finally, Asia and the Pacific, according to the Global Slavery Index, 24,990,000 are currently caught in this

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<sup>40</sup> Global Slavery Index: Country Data. The Minderoo Foundation. [www.globalslaveryindex.org](http://www.globalslaveryindex.org) (web accessed August 1, 2018)

web; of that 66% are in forced labour and 33% are in forced marriage. Even though this research only looked at two categories, this data is nothing to dismiss. The index is only looking at two categories of human trafficking that grips over 40 million people worldwide. And there was no inclusion of those involved in sexual exploitation or state-imposed exploitation.

Statistically, Asia and the Pacific have the highest number of individuals in some form of forced labour and forced marriage. This is important to note because much of the questions, scenarios and strategies that will be identified will target communities situated in major urban centers in South Asia. Now that there has been an identification of some areas where the problem is mushrooming one can better identify potential steps to confront the issue. The responsibility of confronting this crisis now lands on the church. One must look at creative ways that the church is opposing this industry as efforts are made to develop further in roads of redemption and renewal.

### **Where is the Church?**

The church, in the face of these issues, will either pass it to someone else or answer the call to bring salt and light into every corner of the world; even if those corners do not fit nicely into the set theological and/or ecclesiastical frameworks. The church has been formed and called by Christ to be that active agent in the world to bring deep and lasting transformation. As that kingdom of priests<sup>41</sup> the work must infiltrate every facet of every community. The church is lagging behind in many ways in confronting the sex trafficking issue in this present era. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was effectively confronted by a move of the church, the body of Christ, when they along with bold believers such as Wilberforce stated that the reality of a slave trade festering around them and near them was unacceptable. The current situation of human

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<sup>41</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

trafficking is still slavery, but it has multiple shades that blind it from the public, governments and, sadly, the church. There are many believers and local churches combating human trafficking in its various forms though a coordinated effort is still needed. The church must see the crime of human trafficking the same way it sees abortion, poverty, and other macro issues that mobilize it towards significant campaigns to work towards transformation and redemption. As of now others have taken the lead role in this endeavor; as it has in other places putting the church to shame in many ways: “If we the church are not the preeminent leaders in the fight for justice and in the demonstrations of mercy to the oppressed, then we are allowing the world to look more like Jesus than we do.”<sup>42</sup> What excuse does the church have if it believes Ephesians 2:20: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.” As Martin Luther King famously quoted: “an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere”. This injustice of human trafficking is not only everywhere figuratively but also literally. And the church is the one institution that can combat the spiritual depravity and mobilize the various gifts and resources of the body to pierce through the shades.

The church has not fully awakened to the issue of human trafficking around the world but there are multiple ministries that are engaging the issue. This research will look at a few of those ministries and/or churches that can also serve as models for others. First is Agape International Missions<sup>43</sup>. They have three approaches to confronting human trafficking that mirrors many other similar projects. First, they have an eight-lesson prevention plan for churches to help stem the tide or source of human trafficking victims in their community. A second phase of their

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<sup>42</sup> Byun, Eddie. *Justice Awakening: How You and Your Church Can Help End Human Trafficking*. Downers Grove, IL InterVarsity Press 2014

<sup>43</sup> Agape International Missions. AIM. Agapewebsite.org. (web accessed October 2018)

program involves a restoration center (ARC) and training center (ATC) that provides counseling, vocational training and meets various spiritual needs. Third, they work to transform communities by providing a kids' club to teach different lessons, stories, and provide other activities. They have seen the fruit of churches planted and those same ministries replicated in those church plants in Cambodia and other places.

Project Rescue<sup>44</sup> is another key ministry that has been in existence for nearly 20 years. They have a 3-phase approach. Prevention involves after school programs and awareness and other preventative programs. Second, is intervention. At this stage they provide night care shelters, hiv/aids medical clinics, church and Sunday school meetings in the red-light district, and a detention center outreach for those who have been detained for trafficking activities. Restoration involves aftercare or safe homes and vocational training. These diverse phases of ministry reach and impact human trafficking victims at various levels with the goal of pushing the light of the gospel into those trafficking arenas.

Freedom Promise<sup>45</sup> is another ministry making significant strides into the trafficking community. They have a unique model that they follow called THRIVE. They foster Trafficking awareness, provide healthcare, restoration through Christ (equipping local leaders to reach and disciple those in the community), income generation opportunities, vocational training, and education. These steps are all aimed to transform individuals and communities. This holistic approach is essential for communities and individuals who are or have been trafficked. The THRIVE models meets various needs while integrating the gospel throughout the process.

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<sup>44</sup> Project Rescue. Project Rescue Foundation. Projectrescue.com. (web accessed October 2018)

<sup>45</sup> Freedom's Promise. Freedom's Promise 501(c)(3). www.freedompromise.org (web accessed October 2018)

Another significant ministry is taking place in South Korea: Hope Be Restored<sup>46</sup> is a ministry that was begun by a local church there that works to bring restoration to individuals and communities. They have a six step or team approach where they 1) have a established prayer team 2) awareness team, 3) research and investigation team, 4) Networking team, 5) Restoration team, and 6) outreach team. These various teams work in concert to bring holistic impact to those in these communities. As an extension of the network team, they have developed RAFA: (Restoration Alliance of Faith-based Abolitionists). This network, as well as others that will be identified later, are key in mobilizing ministries to impact this mushrooming industry.

An additional network that is attempting to mobilize the faith community is FAAST (Faith Alliance Against Slavery)<sup>47</sup>. In addition to providing a platform for collaboration for various Christian organizations and churches they also provide resources, host training events and develop anti-trafficking programs. FAAST provides a significant platform for the body of Christ and other Christian entities to answer the question: what can I do? In addition, the Global Freedom Network is an ecumenical group that has committed to engage trafficking around the world. There are other networks, organizations, and resources that are doing great work that are not necessarily centered in or started through the church but are worth mentioning such as: [polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org), Center for Combating Human Trafficking-Wichita State University, and [bestalliance.org](http://bestalliance.org).

Thus far this research has looked at what certain ministries are doing. It is not an exhaustive list, but it gives a snapshot of what is being done in some local settings and on a

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<sup>46</sup> Byun, Justice Awakening: How You and Your Church Can Help End Human Trafficking,103

<sup>47</sup> FAAST. Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking.[www.faastinternational.org](http://www.faastinternational.org). (web accessed March 4, 2020)

macro level. Moving forward the research will look at an approach to engaging the human trafficking industry by utilizing a tool that anyone in the church could use that can spark hope with a group who is attached to the burgeoning industry of sexual exploitation. The research will also consider different scenarios that may impact some of the strategies that have been reviewed as well as one that this project will propose; with the goal of seeing lives transformed and empowered.

### **Research Question**

**Can an integrated biblically based and professional skills training provide hope for a group of women to begin the process of exiting the voluntary and/or forced profession of sex work in a South Asian context?**

Time has been taken, thus far, to define different areas of contemporary slavery and highlight some basic percentages regarding the prevalence of contemporary slavery in various parts of the world. In addition, the microscope has been shifted to look at how the church in different parts of the world is confronting the problem; a problem that has grown into one of the greatest moral challenges of the current generation. There are many questions that have been and will continue to be asked as various people work to slowdown the expansion of contemporary slavery. Doing so is not an easy task. Those who have seen success in helping individuals, families, or other groups have in all honesty made a very minor dent on a mountain that seems to continue to expand. One must begin to wrestle honestly with this challenge. The very nature of work has been twisted in different ways within these forms of contemporary slavery; thus, destroying lives by twisting what they have been called to do from the very beginning: work, multiply and glorify God.

This issue will not just go away and as with other forms of evil that are allowed to fester it will begin to disrupt other parts of society in the developed world as it has in various capacities in the developing world. One must ask about the nature of the marketplace role in this fight. It is the marketplace (black market) that is benefiting from this burgeoning business of trafficking and contemporary slavery. So, one must ask how to utilize marketplace tools and connections to slow down the advance of that part of the marketplace? There are questions about money exchange in this growing part of the black market. If money is going into a system that is not circulating in the normal financial sphere, could that do some damage to local economies? In places where there is a red-light district, it is this economy that influences or motivates civil corruption. If one takes it further, can money that is being spent in a specific area for illegal and immoral purposes effect the overall development of an area?

This marketplace portion of the question cannot be ignored and must be matched with a positive workplace effort that will build what the black market through contemporary slavery has and continues to destroy. Can the marketplace be part of a larger vision to bring redemption to these communities? Possibly, if certain steps are taken and one is not afraid to ask hard questions.

Why the church and why adopt or magnify skills to be utilized in the marketplace? God created work for people to grow, flourish, and identify purpose; in Him. Furthermore, since God is the author of work, the marketplace must be subject to Him. It will be a difficult process but how does one partner local churches alongside marketplace forces that are working towards transformative ends? Can the church be about articulating that clear vision for partnership to see more of a measurable, macro impact? There is no denying the spiritual nature of this problem. One deals with spiritual wickedness in every arena of society. So only looking at a marketplace

strategy is not enough. The question “can” has been asked but will the church “want” to move forward with that vision? This problem has either been ignored or people are just ignorant of its reality. Does the church’s role need to be also guiding the marketplace side of the strategy? There may be some blind spots within the marketplace bubble and those blind spots will continue to grow in the future unless the church speaks into that marred sphere?

Why Asia? This project will highlight some work that is taking place in some communities. Statistically, Asia has the greatest number of women in sex trafficking. How does one begin to confront the heart of this mountain at one of its primary strongholds? By bringing the weight of the marketplace and the church as a legitimate counter to and avenue for victims of contemporary slavery to utilize. The goal here is not to just be a drop in the bucket. On the other hand, the objective is to see multiple individuals impacted because they see hope through being exposed to basic principles that can lead to other possibilities. Consequently, the failures and the successes that are birthed from the central research question will lead to more questions like the ones that were posted previously. But it is only by asking bold new questions and attempting bold new initiatives that one will be able to witness bold new results. It is with that question that this research will attempt to move down that path.

### Thesis

#### **Biblically based soft skills training can provide hope for a group of women in the South Asian sex industry to begin moving towards new opportunities.**

The issue of contemporary slavery, as have already been stated, is widespread geographically and socially. It seems that the problem is so engrained in society that dislodging it will take a miraculous move of God to see it not only dislodged but also dismantled in some capacity. The same was true for the abolitionists who confronted engrained slavery in their nations. To view the problem as a mound that can only be climbed so far is not sufficient. The

challenges that are being faced are significant and unique for the current era but the source of strength is the same now as it was for the church then. As the dark industry of contemporary slavery and trafficking becomes more and more difficult to identify and chip away at one must look towards the creative source for greater creative approaches while not forgetting former patterns that Christ laid out to turn the world upside down.<sup>48</sup>

The church must be the tip of the spear because of the depth of depravity that must be confronted in this industry. But one must also be open to snatch every tool at their disposal to go along with that spear for this fight. The direction that the thesis is leading is for one to engage the problem holistically, a *theology of work in action*. The individual must redeem their view of themselves through the gospel, work to transform their view of work and life (theology of work) and multiply efforts within this people group towards that end. The research will first look at Christ's example as a model of how to pull back the multiple layers of contemporary slavery. The proposal is outside the box because the aim is to empower women who have a transformed perspective, who have access to other individuals and groups in those same arenas, who can then serve as further catalysts for transformation. This approach is key because no one organization will suffice. The research will even go as far as to say every other man-made design and organization is insufficient to break through the multiple layers. A multiplication model based on the scriptures may very well be what is needed to see lasting impact.

Christ's command to make disciples of all nations<sup>49</sup> applies to all peoples in every context of every culture and community. Those in contemporary slavery are no different. There are multiple scriptures that Jesus and the Apostles taught that speak about the effect of a

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<sup>48</sup> Acts 17:6

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 28:18-20

kingdom influence in a specific situation as in Matthew 13:33, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.” The hidden and stratified nature of contemporary slavery around the world, and specifically for the purpose of this research, will take time to see broad transformation. But that has been the history of the church. It takes time for the kingdom, though there are times of rapid spurts of growth, to work through a specific context before one can begin to identify significant transformation. The church for the past 2,000 years, though not always, has led the way for many social transformations. Contemporary slavery is one such issue that is being targeted by many organizations and groups, but the church has yet to truly take a leading charge in the fight. Maybe that is why there has been limited results; the more intense the darkness, the more the need for the true light to break through. The leaven that was mentioned in the above verses worked through the society of the early church through multiplication. There were multiple churches planted in key commercial and social centers throughout the Roman empire in Ephesus, Phillipi, Rome, Galatia, Thessalonica and others. These were strategic launching points for further ministry as layer after layer of Roman society was affected by the gospel. It was empowered by the Holy Spirit. That is why the early church was so successful. That is why one’s dependence must be on the Holy Spirit now.

The inspiration for this model to first reach those on the periphery comes foremost from the scriptures and secondly from a woman who was part of a red-light district in an Asian mega-city who came to faith and professed that she desires to stay in the area and reach other women who are currently still entrapped in the industry. The question then arises, how many more people are currently in the human trafficking and contemporary slavery spheres have the desire to not only flourish apart from it but reach back and help others do the same? When one

identifies a people group to reach, there is prayer for those leaders who are true insiders who will rise and take the mantle to reach their own people with the same language, culture, and history. In time God uses those people to have the kind of impact that an outsider could never have. The same could be true for those in contemporary slavery and specifically sex trafficking. There are different layers to that industry with various levels of entrapment. As one person is transformed in one layer and decides to reach back to other layers, to not only share new opportunities but be a catalyst to form a group, that will be nurtured and trained and take advantage of new opportunities, then one could possibly see the cascade effect where multiple groups of these individuals are breaking the chains of that industry. People say, and are correct, that those who control the industry are violent and extremely antagonist towards anyone they feel is a threat to their cash flow. However, the same was true for the early church. People who felt that their livelihoods were threatened by this new message of the gospel met them with violence<sup>50</sup>. Every push of the gospel has been threatened in some way. This is no different, but this is what it will take for the leaven to work through the dough.

It must not stop there. As one identifies individuals and groups in these various layers, they must be equipped with opportunities to flourish and have purpose. They have various needs, yes. But they should not be viewed as only targets for charities but seen as people designed by their Creator to have a life that is productive and transformative. There are different entities working to reach those in these situations. However, it's the marketplace and business entities that can play an essential role. Currently, the black market consumes and benefits the most from the trafficking and contemporary slavery economy. So there needs to be an effort to mobilize a marketplace strategy. The beginning steps of this strategy are looking into their face and asking

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<sup>50</sup> Acts 19:23-41

how they imagine their future and what are their hopes, dreams, and desires. Next, there is the necessity to provide them with “low-lying fruit”; tools and skills that will provide a launching pad. This is where it is helpful to equip the women with soft skill training or essential skills that can be translated into any context. From that the groups of women will work together to develop tangible skills in areas of their interest coupled with developing a plan with the aim that they can devote more time to legitimate work. One of the tragedies of contemporary slavery is that it twists God’s original intent for work into something that is destructive for the individual and community. The aim here is to provide a glimpse of a life that is flourishing vertically with their Creator and horizontally in their community.

### **Overview and Road Map of Thesis**

The journey to see the development of this approach involves a theological framework, literary review, and research based in the community that is being targeted. First, the theological framework will look at a theology of work through a deductive study. The deductive study will look at three principles: opportunity, human flourishing, and purpose, which will connect to the Biblical precepts of faith, hope, and love<sup>51</sup>. That section will dissect different OT and NT stories from the Scriptures where one observes these principles weaving through the text. The focus stories will be Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Ruth, Jesus and finally the future eschaton and eternal state as a return to work as God created it. As will be shared during the program design, stories impact every culture. The desire is to communicate a theology of work that will apply to a culture that is accustomed to telling stories. The chapter on a theological framework will have a systematic approach, however, the aim will be to show that a theology of

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<sup>51</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:13

work is woven throughout the stories mentioned. A further step is to recognize that a theology of work has a significant place in systematic theology. Jesus worked and paid for the salvation of believers. The patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles all worked. Sanctification is work. How one approaches work in every phase and area of life is directly tied to one's spiritual health. Terms like lazy, bored, and purposelessness are antithetical to men and women's design. Yes, there are times of mundane routines, as one will see in the stories from scripture, but those moments were based in opportunity, leading to flourishing and purpose.

Chapter three will take the reader into the literature review that will summarize, outline, and discuss some of the major literature in relation to the subject. The literature review will be two-fold. The first part of the literature review will involve an overview of literature centered around 1. the impact on children, 2. the economics of this crisis and 3. groups who are attempting to have a holistic impact on those in contemporary forms of trafficking and slavery. Then the review will shift into broader discussions of workplace theology followed by a short, integrated discussion of the topics.

Moving into chapter four one will see the design of the project. There will be multiple components to this section. First, the reasoning behind the strategic approach, and the contents of the actual training will be outlined. Second, the survey questions with their responses will be included. The responses to those items will lead into the fifth and final chapter that will aim to translate that data to ascertain the impact of the training, perspectives and critiques from partners and the next steps that can be taken moving forward.

CHAPTER II  
THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK  
A DEDUCTIVE STUDY UTILIZING BIBLICAL NARRATIVE TO OUTLINE A  
THEOLOGY OF WORK

**Opportunity**

Opportunity is not just based on external factors. Yes, they have their influence on one's situation, but they are not necessarily determinative. If one were to take a step further and define opportunity not as an extrinsic necessity for human flourishing and purpose but as a gift leading to a new life<sup>1</sup> defined not by external circumstance but internal communion then the conversation is shifted. There is a constant tension in the world that manifests in every relationship including work; caused by sin. Relational interactions, the world system and work are all corrupted due to the presence of sin. The very fact that people struggle with ethical decisions points to the fact that all need something or someone to transform them internally and their external situation. That internal opportunity can only be realized by knowing the one who created one to flourish and have purpose. Opportunity begins with God. One cannot know flourishing and purpose if one does not know him. One can experience shadows of opportunities that lead to shadows of flourishing and then to shadows of purpose. But until one knows the designer how can one truly come to experience the opportunity(s) that He has designed one for? Psalm 139 opens the door to a new way of thinking regarding opportunity based not in temporal experiences but in the eternal reality of the One who shaped men and women:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 6:4

altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me....Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?....For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

The sex worker in a red light district is no different than the fortune 500 executive if they do not know the One who formed them. The temporal circumstance of a young girl from a South Asian village who grew up in poverty and was sold by her father to sex traffickers is heart breaking. But the young girl who grew up with all the temporal support and opportunities who goes on to academic and professional success is applauded. The difference is obvious, but the similarity is often overlooked. Because, one can argue, that true opportunity is found in the Creator. A theology of work seeks to connect the present reality of work with the eternal purpose and design that God created for work. That theology can be seen through the lens of opportunity, human flourishing, and purpose. Many have provided opportunities for a better life, and this project would not discourage their efforts, by providing financial opportunities, educational training, skills acquisition, etc. Those are all positive items to demonstrate love and one should not stop that. However, opportunity goes deeper. Adam and Even were given the opportunity to work and be fruitful and multiply; in the context that their Creator established for them. They chose, unfortunately, the opportunity that led to destruction. Knowing that, one must recognize that opportunity necessitates choice. One does not have to choose<sup>2</sup> the opportunities that come their way; including the opportunity to be connected to his/her Creator. There is no greater opportunity than that; to know the one who created “work” and applied the concept of work so vividly in creation<sup>3</sup>. This is the deeper intrinsic calling towards opportunity in a theology of work

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<sup>2</sup> Joshua 24:15

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 19:1-2

that all must aspire to. By being connected to Him, one's primary task in history and eternity is complete because there is a connection with the Creator; one can walk in the fruits of the Spirit<sup>4</sup> which can saturate work in whatever setting, that is both God honoring and positively impacts the community. Once one understands that opportunity flourishing can become more of a reality.

### **Human Flourishing**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines flourish as to grow luxuriantly or to thrive. It has been proposed that opportunity is both an extrinsic and intrinsic experience. External factors may influence one towards various directions in life. Thriving can be interpreted as possessing wealth. Many would argue that the person who works and lives in a mansion is thriving more than the person who also works a job and lives in a mud hut. Judging simply through extrinsic terms one could make that determination. However, this project has been pressing into the intrinsic nature of work by first looking at opportunity. Now the scope has moved to human flourishing. This is where one will come face-to-face with the *prosperity gospel* and what this research terms as the *secular prosperity doctrine*. They are the same concept but attempt to root themselves in other places. The prosperity gospel argues give a lot so you will get even more. It attempts to root itself in the gospels but falls short. The secular prosperity doctrine can be seen throughout history popping up during the enlightenment, Nietzsche, Marx, and its current full manifestation, post-modernism. The secular prosperity doctrine, foremost, detaches itself from anything that says that there is a need for God. From its perspective opportunity is grounded in oneself and not God. If that perspective is taken, then one can be led to believe that flourishing is based solely on and accomplished for the self. One flourishes because God desires everyone to

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<sup>4</sup> Galatians 5:22-23

flourish and one does that when they are connected to Him<sup>5</sup>. A fully flourishing life is something that all desire but do not always experience. But before one can have a right perspective on their external flourishing one must first have the correct perspective regarding the need to flourish internally. One is free when they can understand that flourishing is a biproduct of a correct alignment with the Creator. That alignment gives a fuller perspective and understanding of the concept of work as something that is not apart from but part of who one is. Furthermore, with the correct alignment one can then be able to work not solely to obtain sustenance but as an intrinsic extension of the Imago Dei. From that point work is transformed from a burdensome task to a life and, potentially, community transforming event.

How does one look into the eyes of those who are being trafficked or struggling to survive in some slum that they are meant to flourish when their experience has been brokenness and fear? First, answer the question of opportunity that was discussed previously. Second, emphasize who they are as the Imago Dei and that they can flourish in Him and participate in work that does not disrupt who they are. This, ultimately, opens the door to purpose. Something that everyone wants in some capacity for their work and lives but do not always realize.

## Purpose

The approach to a theology of work that this project is taking first looks at opportunity. Once real opportunity is captured then one can begin to truly flourish. At this point one can say that they have purpose in their position and work. Purpose can seem elusive. To want to know why you are created and why you are where you are can turn into an obsession. But true purpose can rather be defined by whom one is connected to, not necessarily by what one does. The

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<sup>5</sup> John 10:10

scriptures leads one in this pursuit, “For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory.”<sup>6</sup> One’s purpose must not be sought out apart from God. It must be pursued in and through Him. Many define their work as a gauge for their purpose in life. There may be other gauges that people use. If done that way then many will not necessarily be satisfied. Purpose that is grounded in the Creator has its full expression in Him. It must go through Him because some who are involved in nefarious activities may say, “that, that is my purpose because I am good at it and it makes me happy.” On the other hand, just like opportunity and human flourishing, a full grasp of one’s purpose begins with aligning with Him.

What one does may not necessarily make one happy. However, one can inject purpose into every work and life situation by recognizing the primacy of God in all things. As one looks at a theology of work for the most disenfranchised in many population centers there may be a complete void of purpose. As the research moves forward it will walk through some responses of women working in a red-light district in a South-Asian megacity. It will not be easy, but this research will take their perspectives as a further step in the work to help them see their value as the Imago Dei and the opportunity, the flourishing, and the purpose that they, like others, have been called to.

### **More than a Movement: Opportunity, Flourishing and Purpose**

While taking a hard look at the Theology of Work and how it can be defined and described, one is challenged to think of theology of work as not just a movement but in many ways a link between different theological perspectives and life. The project will get more into this later, but one must first mention the work of Christ in completing the requirements of

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 11:36

Soteriology or salvation. Work was tied to all of his life; even to the point of death on the cross. He restored us to fellowship with the Father and restored us to himself as workers who pursue him out of joy.

In addition, we take part in the grand work of sanctification. God designed us for himself; to be fruitful and multiply. He gives man an opportunity through the process of sanctification to follow Him daily. Sanctification is sometimes very difficult. It is work. Sanctification is interwoven throughout the believer's life experience. It takes work to follow Christ in the workplace, the home, the community, and any of another number of places one can identify. How one does work if seen through this lens changes the concept from a movement to a normal part of the Christian lifestyle. This writing attempts to draw out this reality by looking at opportunity, flourishing, and purpose. These are not separate from one another but are linked together. This will become increasingly evident as those concepts begin to weave through the lives of Adam and Eve, Noah, and others, who by faith and the power of God working through their lives, experienced opportunity, flourishing, and purpose.

### **Adam and Eve: Recovering from the fall to rediscover purpose**

When one traditionally looks at a theology of work one starts before the fall, as they should; to engage God's original purpose for work. However, this time the starting point is where everyone finds themselves after the fall; in need of the gracious God to come so man can flourish and experience purpose as he was always meant to. So, one will look at opportunity with Adam and Eve. They now find themselves in a strange circumstance that is completely opposite of what they experienced in the garden. In the garden work, relationship, purpose, and

flourishing were all experiences that God had set them on.<sup>7</sup> There was no sin, no conflict, no want, and no bondage. Though now they find themselves apart from that due to one act of disobedience. They could not get back to that relationship that they once had, by their own efforts. The opportunity in the garden had been lost. The opportunity to sin and grasp for purpose outside of the eternal creator had led them to a moment of insanity where they rejected the eternal for the temporal; an insanity that all are faced with and are guilty of at times. They were created for the work of being fruitful and multiplying throughout the earth. Their whole eternal life experience was going to be that of working in the Presence and for the glory of God.

Their situation changed but the opportunity to take part in God's plan was still based on God's provision. It began with a covering, "The Lord God made garments from skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them."<sup>8</sup> Praise God for His covering. And praise Him for his provision of opportunity to be with him. Like Adam and Eve, God has no desire for us to go around naked and in shame. By covering them God begins to bring them back towards himself. They previously made a feeble attempt to cover themselves.<sup>9</sup> Man's coverings are never good enough; as well as every opportunity that one pursues apart from recognizing and surrendering to God.

Their efforts to hide their shame are as puny as their efforts to hide from God since their man-made coverings are ineffective (v. 21). "Made" ('āsā) and "coverings" (*hāgōrōt*) anticipate v. 21, where God "made" durable "garments" (*kotēnōt*) from animal skins for their needed apparel<sup>10</sup>

All that one tries to accomplish that does not take God into account will fade. Only those actions and decisions that are God centered will have any value and are, thus, worth one's entire

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 1-2

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 3:21 NET

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 3:7 NET

<sup>10</sup> Mathews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26* (Vol. 1A, p. 239). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

effort. What is one to do with opportunity? What did Adam and Eve do? They accepted the new skins that God graciously gave to them. Humans can only graciously receive the opportunity for freedom, joy, flourishing and purpose. One is only tying leaves together when they start or run their business, organization, government, school, and of course church without giving thought to the universal principles and truth that flow from the eternal God. Every institution that rejects the skins for the leaves ultimately fails. Those leaves cover but eventually expose the unethical behavior, the cheating, the debauchery and every other spiral of sin and shame. But skin has been offered to us; a new doorway to live and work.

To flourish in a fallen world is not easy. It can be and is throughout one's life a painful grind. When one hears the word flourish at times one may think of a flower growing undisturbed in a field. Life is not that. One toils, works, cries, laughs, and juggles several other emotions as they flourish. As one will see first with Adam and Eve and then with subsequent individuals in the Biblical narrative, to flourish meant that there was going to be pain. Look at Genesis 3:16-20 HCSB:

<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” <sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; <sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” <sup>20</sup> The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

The consequences of sin stated in those verses must not be turned around to seem as if it is some blessing in disguise. It is a painful reminder of why humankind is in the situation they live in today. The pain and the drudgery of work all flows from this curse. But the faithful are called to

live and move forward.<sup>11</sup> With the curses, with the pain, and the unfulfilling career, the opportunity, though shrouded, is there; to be part of the eternal story that involves and is directed by God. If this writer could be granted some latitude it can be said there was a resolve that emerged in them; not from their own sense of strength but knowing that though they failed there was hope because instead of being left naked they were given a covering that would allow them to move forward and flourish despite sin's curse. One can see this in the first births depicted in Genesis 4:1-2. "Adam was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'I have had a male child with the LORD's help.' Then she also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground."<sup>12</sup> Childbearing was going to be painful but Eve in the mist of pain flourished by giving birth with the Lord's help. Following the tragedy and pain of Abel's murder and Cain's banishment she continued to conceive and have children.<sup>13</sup> It is hard to find joy when pain has defined so much of one's life: the young girl who has been trafficked, to those families and children dying because of poverty, and families who have been torn apart because of constant conflict. However, one presses on because to flourish means that one must meet pain with God's grace. Easier said than done. Yes, but toil is what it is: struggle that, because of the opportunities God gives, can give birth to something beautiful.

A proper theology of work always recognizes God's movement in one's situation and environment. God is sovereign over all situations, and he always has a plan and purpose that stretches beyond the present moment of discouragement, suffering and pain. After the fall, Adam

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<sup>11</sup> Philippians 3:14-15

<sup>12</sup> *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian standard version.* (2009). (Ge 4:1–2). Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers.

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 4:25-26

and Eve had to have been experiencing any number of emotions; regret probably being on the top of the list. But God's purpose persists despite shortcomings. The fall required the intervention of the only one who could, ultimately, rescue them. With that opportunity they were also going to take part in God's redemptive purpose for all of Creation that had been affected by the curse.

This is important because the overarching purpose of every person is to bring glory to God and participate in his redemptive purpose. Adam and Eve would specifically take a unique position in this plan. They would launch the human race and in so doing the pathway for the redemption of man and creation would be set in motion: "I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed, He will strike your head , and you will strike his heel."<sup>14</sup> The stage had been set for a battle that would be carried out in every area of life, especially work:

God said there would be a perpetual struggle between satanic forces and mankind. It would be **between Satan and the woman**, and their respective **offspring** or "seeds." The "offspring" of the woman was Cain, then all humanity at large, and then Christ and those collectively in Him. The "offspring" of the serpent includes demons and anyone serving his kingdom of darkness, those whose "father" is the devil (John 8:44). Satan would cripple mankind (**you will strike at his heel**), but *the Seed*, Christ, would deliver the fatal blow (**He will crush your head**).<sup>15</sup>

The work of creation, including man, had been separated from God, one another, from nature, and from God's purpose in the very beginning to work and subdue the earth.<sup>16</sup> As one is renewed so is their work. Eve gave birth and one can infer that Adam was working to provide for his wife. There was a disruption but not a complete halt to their design to work.

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<sup>14</sup> Genesis 3:15 HCSB

<sup>15</sup> Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 33). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 1:28

It may be a mistake when some people go grasping for the next book or speaker in order to get clarity on their “purpose”; to understand or know that elusive “thing” that will enlighten their lives and grasp their purpose. That assumption applies to the Christian community. One’s purpose, as stated is to bring God glory but like the other men and women of the faith one may have to simply press through those multiple seasons of disappoint and strain with only the promise that the head of the antagonist will soon be crushed. This is the hope and expectation of the redeemed in every circumstance. It is frustrating but necessary to set one’s eyes on that hope.

As time passed others began to take part in the central purpose that had been lost at the fall, *the work of worship*: “A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the Yaweh.” This pattern would continue to be evident in the lives of believers throughout future generations. A.P. Ross in the Bible Knowledge Commentary makes an interesting statement that another way to translate, “man began to call” is to say man began to “proclaim.”<sup>17</sup> There has always been the necessity to connect to the Father because he has given one the opportunity to flourish and take part in His purpose, which transforms one’s life and work. However, as one abides, he/she naturally begins to proclaim or be a light in their sphere of influence. The work to inform the lost of the opportunity to return to God and flourish in Him as man was originally meant to in the garden was starting and those who would follow would have more and more decisive impacts on a world that is groaning for redemption.<sup>18</sup>

### **Noah: The work of the ark and a call to flourish**

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<sup>17</sup> Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>18</sup> Romans 8:22-23

Every individual has the opportunity to know the Creator and flourish in Him and His purpose or to choose a life disconnected from his presence; leading to aimlessness. Adam and Eve had lost paradise, but, through the initiation of God, they were covered by Him, and a series of events leading to the full redemption and flourishing of man and creation had begun. Between the fall and future eschaton there are going to be dark days as one can see in the time of Noah: “But the Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind had become great on the earth. Every inclination of the thoughts of their minds was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he made humankind on the earth, and he was highly offended.<sup>19</sup> In the midst of those dark days, however, there will be those who are still working and experiencing God’s goodness; those whom God calls for the opportunity to worship him and flourish in His purpose.

Noah and his family found themselves in one of the darkest moments of human history. All the inhabitants of the earth had descended into deeper and deeper levels of depravity. So much so that a race of Nephilim<sup>20</sup> had been spawned that was further physical evidence of that continued depravity. But Noah was separate and because of that he was called to something more and significant. The challenge in every arena of the world today: business, politics, education, social services, and Christian ministry is to stand apart from the crowd that winks at sin and walk into our purpose to worship the Father and glorify him with one’s whole life.

Noah now was in the line for God’s initiated opportunity to carry on his purpose. Genesis 6:8 states clearly, “But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord.” It was God’s favor that led to the opportunity to build the ark.<sup>21</sup> God may ask one to do something beyond their capabilities

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<sup>19</sup> Genesis 6:5-6 (NET)

<sup>20</sup> Genesis 6:4

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 6:14-17

and imagination. He is calling one to approach his perspective and match their imagination with his eternal power. Many believers flourish. Many believers have a positive impact at their jobs and live and experience a good life. On the other hand, it takes an imagination loosed by God's Word to say let's do something that is beyond us that God has called us to; like build a massive Ark. Along the way Noah was assured of God's presence and blessing: "but I will confirm my covenant with you. You will enter the ark—you, your sons, your wife, your sons' wives with you."<sup>22</sup> With the opportunity comes one's responsibility to take hold and obey. Noah did not allow the reality of the Ark to overwhelm him or take it as a reason to pat himself on the back and brag about the opportunity that God had given him. On the other hand, he stepped up and got to work, "And Noah did all that God commanded him—he did indeed."<sup>23</sup> Too many times believers are faced with problems and challenges in themselves, families or communities but instead of doing something they just stare at him; hoping that it will get done by someone else. That is not who the redeemed are supposed to be. They are the ones who should be taking the lead or at least taking part in redeeming the culture and communities in which they reside. Like Noah the call is right there in front; but one must answer with faith, hope and love.

A theology of work involves flourishing. In the case of Noah, and many others, flourishing and purpose run parallel. Noah had to build the Ark and in so doing he would walk in obedience but also experience the flourishing and purpose of God. Every living creator on the boat would be called to go and multiply: "Bring out with you all the living creatures that are with you. Bring out every living thing, including the birds, animals, and every creeping thing that

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<sup>22</sup> Genesis 6:18 NET

<sup>23</sup> Genesis 6:22

creeps on the earth. Let them increase and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”<sup>24</sup> From the very beginning Noah’s purpose was to build the ark to preserve life and set things in motion for all those on the ship to flourish through re-populating the earth:

*That they may breed abundantly...* With these words the Lord would cheer the mind of Noah, and inspire him with confidence, that a seed had been preserved in the ark which should increase till it replenished the whole earth. In short, the renovation of the earth is promised to Noah; to the end that he may know that the world itself was in closed in the ark, and that the solitude and devastation, at the sight of which his heart might faint, would not be perpetual.<sup>25</sup>

Calvin writes above that the devastation, “would not be perpetual”. Is that not the definition of why one should persist in a theology of work? The devastation of the fall will not be perpetual! Throughout history God has called out his people to participate in His story of redemption and renewal to flourish and be about flourishing the environments around them. The redeemed live in a world where the senses say otherwise; it seems that work and various efforts are not yielding any fruits. The painstakingly long days that Noah spent building the ark could not have been easy. The opportunity to walk with God is not an easy road to take. Once called to it one is challenged because the senses do not match the God shaped vision that His opportunity is pulling them towards.

There is another major point of application that one must understand in regard to the ark. Those who are positioned with God are safe in His will. There are multiple challenges and dangers that come that challenge one’s faith. When one is secure in the promise of God then one can live free. It is that freedom to live because of security in God that allows one to live for God in every sphere of social or professional interaction. How does one work while being salt and light when jobs are threatened because of faith? How does the family who is surrounded by

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<sup>24</sup> Genesis 6:17 NET

<sup>25</sup> Calvin, John and John King. *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010.

threats because of their faith live, work, and go about life? The realization that they are with God. What one does must be informed by who they are in Christ. For Noah the purpose of the ark and his position in it was defined by who he was as defined by God and his faith in God's promises. At every point of history there is opportunity to join with God to flourish in his purpose. History is not always ideal, but He has shaped it so that his story and Name will be made known in all the earth.

### **Abraham: A vision and faith**

“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, , and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name.’”<sup>26</sup>

The stage had been set for a journey of faith that would define a man and impact generations of believers. Abraham was here given the opportunity to trust and believe the God and embrace a purpose he had not fully realized until that point.<sup>27</sup> This is the call of faith that God initiates in every believer. The world and curse of sin is too great, along with the shade that it throws over one’s eyes, to overcome alone. Abraham at this time had every opportunity to just live his own comfortable life. The reality is that there are competing opportunities throughout the world as there are two kingdoms, two ways for one to go about one’s work and two ways to live life. One can press ahead and try to reach for what they think will lead them to success or one

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<sup>26</sup> Genesis 12:1-3 NET

<sup>27</sup> The religio-historical point of the passage certainly is the call of Abram to found a new nation. Israel would learn by this that her very existence was God’s work through a man who responded by faith and left for Canaan. It would be a message to convince Israel of the divine call they were facing, and their need of faith for their move from Egypt to Canaan: Ross, Allen P. “Genesis.” In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.

can take another road and pursue Him who knows every detail of life: past, present, and future. It is not easy to walk that life of faith but that is what Abraham decided. This reaches back to the central point of opportunity that is God inspired, led, and accomplished. Abraham's work up until that point was focused solely on his temporal flourishing; to seek out opportunities to maintain his deceived status quo. However, God was calling him to step out of the familiar into something not only greater but the most real thing he could ever experience. That is the God of creation. Like Abraham, He challenges one to look beyond themselves and to take part in the divine opportunity that he has laid out.

What is one to do with the tyranny of circumstances? There are those who are in extremely adverse situations. Can they experience the kind of opportunity that leads to freedom and flourishing? Certainly! Regardless of one's circumstances the grace of God is sufficient, from the darkest brothel to the highest office. The work that God is calling one into can only be entered by faith, with no favoritism. Faith involves the simplest of efforts but is confronted by the staunchest wall of resistance. The mind games enter in, and one asks how they can enter this life of blessing and favor by only an act of belief? Because that is the key. The scriptures go on to say in Romans 4:1-5:

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh, has discovered regarding this matter? For if Abraham was declared righteous by the works of the law, he has something to boast about – but not before God. For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now to the one who works, his pay is not credited due to grace but due to obligation. But to the one who does not work, but believes in the one who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is credited as righteousness."

It is a turning of perspective to see faith as the central objective of the believer. But the life of faith is constantly opposed. One sees that throughout the life of Abraham and in the story of Isaac. To assume that there was no strain in Abraham's journey of faith when God commanded him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice is to dismiss the emotions and love of a father for his only

son. If one reads from when the command was given through the journey to the place of sacrifice, it can be assumed Abraham's faith was under intense strain:

Take your son," He said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

<sup>3</sup> So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. <sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance<sup>28</sup>

Abraham in chapter 12 had entered this new and great opportunity with God that had brought victory, joy, and some sadness. However, he, by God's grace, was moving forward and prospering in ways he could not have originally imagined. It is interesting with God that when one thinks that they have arrived he shocks them with something else. Contentment and a believer's status quo is not what God has called us to. The life of faith, as the crux for a theology of work, is not to become settled. If at any time one thinks their faith and deeper opportunities walking with God have reached a ceiling, then God has a way of surprising and waking them up to an even deeper walk of faith. But one screams because they do not understand, necessarily, what God is always up to. His work in the believer and in the world just does not make sense at times. If His sovereign work is of supreme importance, then, one must trust Him. It's easy to be frustrated because on one hand God has a supreme purpose in the world; that his ways and thoughts are higher than our ways and thoughts<sup>29</sup> but it does not make sense what he is doing. The twisted world of work involving trafficking and contemporary slavery with its various forms is enough to make most people scream. But God is working. In addition, he has called the church to work first in faith; to labor in prayer as the first and integrated initiative to confront the darkest

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<sup>28</sup> *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian standard version.* (2009). (Ge 22:2–4). Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers.

<sup>29</sup> Isaiah 55:8-9

parts of the world. However, the opportunity to take part in that work of transformation<sup>30</sup> and every subsequent step begins with faith. That breaks the walls of unethical behavior and the layers of debauchery that characterize the trafficking industry.

Abraham was faced with a task of faith; to believe that God would accomplish his promise, somehow<sup>31</sup>. While on that mount God stopped his hand. Faith had once again met victory because God was at work. One's faith connects to God's work which sets in motion the work for His ultimate purpose in the world.

As one moves forward by faith God opens their eyes. Those opportunities, if taken seriously and more importantly taking God seriously, he will open the believer's imagination. For Abraham the stars and grains of sand were what opened his eyes even further to the work that he was taking part in alongside the Father, "I will indeed bless you, and I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be as countless as the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the seashore..."<sup>32</sup> It cannot be emphasized enough the importance that one's vocation in life or even profession finds its full meaning and realization when they take hold of the opportunity to trust and follow God as the real CEO (Complete, Everlasting, Omnipotent). One's theology of work is

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<sup>30</sup> Psalm 84:6

<sup>31</sup> By the demand that he should sacrifice to God this only son of his wife Sarah, in whom his seed was to grow into a multitude of nations (Gen. 17:4, 6, 16), the divine promise itself seemed to be cancelled, and the fulfilment not only of the desires of his heart, but also of the repeated promises of his God, to be frustrated. And by this demand his faith was to be perfected into unconditional trust in God, into the firm assurance that God could even raise him up from the dead.—But this trial was not only one of significance to Abraham, by perfecting him, through the conquest of flesh and blood, to be the father of the faithful, the progenitor of the Church of God; Isaac also was to be prepared and sanctified by it for his **vocation** in connection with the history of salvation. (Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.)

<sup>32</sup> Genesis 22:17

defined in that place of worship and faith. Like Abraham there will be competing opportunities in life but one moves forward by faith because it is God who works in the believer for His good purpose.

As Abraham walked with God his faith and other parts of his life flourished. The opportunity to walk with God brings blessing. Before going any further this does not mean this research is advocating a prosperity gospel. The blessing of God is for all believers. His blessing impacts every sphere of life: “The benediction, however, here pronounced, extends farther than to offspring; and implies, that he should have a prosperous and joyous issue of all his affairs; as appears from the succeeding context, “And will make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.”<sup>33</sup> God continues to emphasize His blessing throughout the scriptures that focus on the life Abraham:

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram! I am your shield and the one who and the one who will reward you in great abundance.”<sup>34</sup> No longer will your name be Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham because I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you extremely fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you.<sup>35</sup>

However, as one flourishes, it is not meant to be contained for selfish gains<sup>36</sup>. One can see that clearly in Genesis 12:2-3. Abraham is to be blessed in order that he can then be a blessing to

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<sup>33</sup> Calvin, J., & King, J. (2010). *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Vol. 1, p. 347). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

<sup>34</sup> Genesis 15:1 NET

<sup>35</sup> Genesis 17:5-6

<sup>36</sup> **Possessing and Blessing (14:1–24).** Abraham’s dominion over his inheritance was not to be uncontested. The invasion and subjugation of the cities of the plain by the kings of the east represented resistance to Abraham’s claim to the land. Abraham, acting on behalf of El Elyon, the Almighty God, overcame this threat. In rescuing Lot’s people, Abraham was fulfilling his God-given charge to be a blessing to other nations.

Merrill, Eugene H. “The Pentateuch.” In *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, edited by David S. Dockery. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998.

others. He would serve as a conduit of blessing for many other peoples and nations; for example, verse two: “you will be a blessing.” Furthermore, at the end of verse 3: “and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Whenever one’s flourishing is self-centered it is not the kind of flourishing that is God-centered and aims to be a blessing to those in the broader community. Adam and Eve after the fall were given a covering; not so that they could go hide on some plot of land and live out the rest of their days but so that they could move forward as the ancestors of the human race and take their part in God’s plan of redemption. Noah was blessed by God to build the ark in order that he would be a blessing to his family and steward the animals that were entrusted to him. Abraham was tasked to carry on that life of faith and blessing in an even deeper way on behalf of God as a crucial part of the redemptive plan.

That blessing, as has been stated, is to flow into the areas throughout the world. That is the truth and reality for believers who work in secular, even hostile, environments. One gives their gifts, resources, even their lives, as a living sacrifice<sup>37</sup> in order that they are not living for themselves but for the King and His kingdom. Giving is part of the work of the redeemed. It is hard to get up and go to that job at times and it’s hard at other times to give sacrificially. But in giving, one’s work takes on a whole new layer of meaning and purpose because the work is not just about the one in the mirror fulfilling their desires but also giving to something greater.

Abraham following a significant victory had an opportunity to give out of what he was blessed with. In giving, Abraham’s life and purpose took on an even deeper level of meaning:

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (Now he was the priest of the Most High God.) He blessed Abram, saying, ‘Blessed be Abram by the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth. Worthy of praise is the Most High God, who delivered your enemies into your hand.’ Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Romans 12:1-2

<sup>38</sup> Genesis 14:18-20

Not only does giving expand one's purpose of work, it is also a reminder that any success at work is not based on one's singular efforts but the sovereign plan of God. As the redeemed flourishes God gets the glory. As one's purpose is defined in Him there must be a continual turning back to him. This is demonstrated during the event of Melchizedek. A theology of work is worked out throughout one's life. And a theology of work that does not involve giving as an essential part and outflow of work misses an important element.

Believers must be continually reminded that this story is not about them. As in Abraham's life, so with every believer; one is living towards and working towards a much higher standard of life. That is why the redeemed can say with Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God." Abraham trusted and obeyed God. He had his failings but ultimately his purpose to be a blessing during his time and be part of God's movement through history was reached. Reached not by Abraham's extraordinary efforts or gifts but by faith and not by sight.

### **Joseph: Between a dream and a hard place**

It cannot be overstated that Joseph's life magnifies multiple principles of how a vertical perspective on life can affect horizontal situations. Joseph's story begins with a dream that would shake his family and speak to a significant future that was approaching. That vision, however, was shaken by wave after wave of trial and difficulty. Opportunities were met with valleys but through each situation he flourished as one observes God's purpose for his life unfolding in the scriptures. If anyone could have felt slighted or discouraged, Joseph could have. It can be assumed that there were moments of emotional and psychological struggle. However, he seemed

not to get caught and defined by the valleys. As one pursues God their work and life takes on a much deeper meaning and purpose; with Josesph, it began with a dream:

“Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him even more. He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: There we were, binding sheaves of grain in the middle of the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose up and stood upright and your sheaves surrounded my sheaf and bowed down to it!” Then his brothers asked him, ‘Do you really think you will rule over us or have dominion over us?’ They hated him even more because of his dream and because of what he said. Then he had another dream, and told it to his brothers. ‘Look,’ he said. ‘I had another dream. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’<sup>39</sup>

The reader sees immediately in Joseph’s story the call of God on his life; that he would be a leader in some significant capacity. The call and the opportunity were both initiated by God. The specifics would not have been altogether clear for Joseph, but God had implanted a vision that only God in his power could accomplish. A pattern seen through the Old Testament: God calling his people into an opportunity to trust him with their life which includes their work and/or purpose. Joseph’s dream would be a reminder through all the difficult days that lay ahead. When one walks with God it is His presence and His Word that sustains them, “The wise recognize that the Lord God is sovereign over nature and the nations, and that He righteously orders the affairs of His people. At times God’s ways seem unfair and paradoxical, but if endured by faith they bring blessings to the righteous.<sup>40</sup> Sometimes His Word and promises are all that one has to hold onto. Like Joseph, one must hold on, even when the surrounding circumstances challenges those promises.

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<sup>39</sup> Genesis 37:5-9

<sup>40</sup> Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 87). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Furthermore, when it comes to opportunity there is an unexpected turn as the reader dives into the onset of his suffering. Joseph's brothers would sell him to slavery.<sup>41</sup> He was thrown into a pit then sold to slave traders headed to Egypt. How could this be an opportunity? Because God is present and has a purpose in the pain of His people. There is always opportunity in the mist of pain and disappointment. Yes, that is easier said than done. What kind of opportunity leads to slavery? The opportunity that only God can set-up and use. As one will see throughout Joseph's life there was a process of development that was also taking place. God may bless one with opportunity, but he wants to ensure that one is ready for every new layer that is peeled off for that opportunity. One can force their way up the ladder and dip their toe into sin to satisfy those anxious desirers or one can recognize God as their fullness of joy and strength. As one moves through Joseph's life one will see additional opportunities as God blessed him and crystalized his purpose for him moving forward.

So, a valley led to an opportunity to work in an Egyptian home: Potiphar. As one walks with God as, Joseph did, there is the potential to flourish:

The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, serving in the household of his Egyptian master.<sup>3</sup> When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful,<sup>4</sup> Joseph found favor in his master's sight and became his personal attendant. Potiphar also put him in charge of his household and placed all that he owned under his authority.<sup>5</sup> From the time that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph. The LORD's blessing was on all that he owned, in his house and in his fields.<sup>6</sup> He left all that he owned under Joseph's authority; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.<sup>42</sup>

The believer praises God for this but there may be some who ask, "Why did God bring him there to bless the home of an idolater?" God is at work. One may see just one part of the picture, but

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<sup>41</sup> Genesis 37:26-28

<sup>42</sup> *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian standard version.* (2009). (Ge 39:2–6). Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers.

God knows the depth and possibilities of the entire story. If one is resolved to trust God then they will flourish in various ways, places, and times. The situation may not always be ideal, but it fits into God's plans. Joseph had to be resolved to work and be faithful with his duties even though memories of that dream still lingered. Maybe thoughts such as, "how can I be debased in such a way" came and went during the routines of his day. He had come from a wealthy family and a promising future. However, God's opportunities are usually met with periods of trial to soften hearts and open minds to the movement of God.

This movement must be sustained in the heart. As God moves there must be a continual checking of the heart and alertness<sup>43</sup> unless blessing is followed by a fall. The story comes to a pivotal point in Joseph's life. One could argue that this was not only a pivotal but also one of the two most defining points in his life. Potiphar's wife provided Joseph with an opportunity to trust himself fully to God or allow the valley to define him. Potiphar's wife lived in that valley. She saw the blessing of God upon Joseph, but she was not able to explain or understand it; which her actions demonstrated. Thus, this defining opportunity would further point Joseph to higher levels of his purpose. The believer must be careful because the blessing of God can bring joy and but if one's focus is on the blessing and not on God then one can become numb to the enemy. This opportunity may not be what one would expect as an "opportunity", but it was. There were two choices: 1) fall into temptation and open the door to disruption of his purpose or 2) trust God and run.

Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her. <sup>11</sup> Now one day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were there. <sup>12</sup> She grabbed him by his garment and said, "Sleep with me!" But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran outside<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> 1 Peter 5:8-9

<sup>44</sup> Genesis 37:10-12

One must not make the mistake of thinking that every opportunity is some major door to some grand experience or work. Most of the time opportunities involve decisions of the heart that involve simple obedience. That obedience can range from choosing to be honest on that financial report, being honest with one's congregation, or informing the supervisor of a mistake that was made that will affect the team or department. Those are the truly defining opportunities that must be met every day. Joseph ran from the viper in the valley. And once again it was the Spirit of God that empowered him. Think about it. At his age his hormones must have been humming, in addition to the assumption that Potiphar's wife was likely a very lovely Egyptian woman who had strategized for a moment just like that. But Joseph did what the world would say was "unmanly." Consequently, his connection to God was far more significant than a moment of lust with an Egyptian.

Just like many of the opportunities one has are seemingly small and insignificant, much of how and when God moves in us takes place in the hidden places; where only God knows whether one obeyed or faltered. His choice earned him a place in the prison. This is not irony but providence. When one does not take the bait, that is the reality that believers sometime face. One may not get promoted in the way they expect but they get demoted to be promoted. God's method of progress and achievement is counter to this temporal system. God's blessing is for the dark places. Those who live in slums, poverty, war zones, and other depraved situations have access to the Savior King. He wants to meet people in the darkness because not only is there blessing, but He receives the glory. How else could Joseph flourish as he did as a slave in Potiphar's home unless God was with him? The blessing and flourishing continued in the prison: But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him. He granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. <sup>22</sup> The warden put all the prisoners who were in the prison under Joseph's

authority, and he was responsible for everything that was done there.<sup>23</sup> The warden did not bother with anything under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him, and the LORD made everything that he did successful<sup>45</sup>

There are two principles that must be recognized here. First, God prepares believers for greater and greater impact. This is seen throughout the lives of the Biblical figures, and it is apparent in the life of Joseph as God weaved his life through various experiences in order to equip him for the position that he would later receive. That first principle is something that believers must hold onto. Second, that no matter where one may be or where one may work they can and should be a blessing. There is no denying that God used Joseph as a servant in Potiphar's house and as a prison manager and later to impact Egypt and the world. A janitor, teacher, CEO, or other professional has equally as much potential for impact. Not because of resources or idealism but because of the God who is in control. When one is connected to Him all else pales in importance. The believer's lifework takes on a deeper focus regardless of their circumstances.

Joseph's life testimony is a lesson to believers in the present day in every nation and culture; embrace the blessing and purpose of God where one is planted. If more believers did that, then think of the impact. How would the nearby slums and red-light districts look? As work moves away from being simply a professional pursuit or means of survival and is embraced as an opportunity for the blessing of God to flow through the believer into that specific arena then there is no limit to what could be accomplished in that environment. If God did it in the home of Potiphar and in a prison cell through Joseph, how much more for those who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

If one is willing to surrender, not only their situation, but also their perspectives, emotions, and self-will, then one begins to experience the flourishing and purpose in every

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<sup>45</sup> Genesis 39:21-23

circumstance. It is important to emphasize that when the word purpose is used in the context of this writing, it is not speaking of some magnified idealistic concept to pursue. On the other hand, what one must consider is, can one find some purpose that honors God in their work and daily routines and efforts. Joseph flourished during his work in Potiphar's house, in the prison, and while doing mundane work routines because he trusted the God who blessed and called him. As a believer one can know that God is moving in their circumstances and, more importantly, He has called His redeemed people to life in him and horizontal impact in the world. For those who do not know God and choose to still pursue ethical behavior there is the fact that they are moving towards a goal or ideal that is higher than themselves. Without that starting point Joseph's story would be different. God was just as much glorified in Joseph's eventual ascension to his position of leadership in Egypt as he was when he was working in that dark prison.

One must be resolved to say, "God no matter where I am it will be a place of springs."<sup>46</sup> Looking at Joseph's story there are two significant lessons that one can draw from his life. The first, as has been discussed, regards honoring God where one is positioned in work or life. The second is more specific for Joseph but there are principles that one can draw from them. Joseph went through a gauntlet of challenges, but God's purpose prevailed, "Now do not be upset and do not be angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me ahead of you to preserve life!"<sup>47</sup> What a great response on Joseph's behalf. Instead of giving his brothers a small lecture about their wayward decision, a history lesson on his experiences or flaunting his wealth and position in front of them he simply stated that 'God sent me ahead.' Surely it took Joseph some time to get to this point. God desires that His people consistently walk in holiness. It was a

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<sup>46</sup> Psalm 84:6

<sup>47</sup> Genesis 45:5 NET

long road for Joseph but his eyes being set on God is the greatest testimony of his heart and the One who gave him success in his work.

At that moment in the story there was a very explicit recognition of God's sovereign hand throughout his ordeal. However, it is important to remember that not everyone will recognize God's sovereignty in their situations. Depending on their "angle" there are multiple comments that could be said. Many may not understand why a person in a company, organization, etc. may choose to pursue a more ethical path when a few steps to the right or left may bring more profit. If one goes back a few chapters others may ask what the harm would have been to just flirt with Potiphar's wife a little. Joseph could turn away because God was his pursuit and delight. He knows every thought and word before it even rolls off the tongue. For someone who recognizes the sovereignty of God in all situations and delights in following him, of course they can say with Joseph, 'God sent me ahead':

"It's important that we grasp this truth about God as firmly as Joseph did. In Genesis we've seen God act in direct interventions. He created Adam and Eve. He set aside the orderly processes of nature to bring on earth a cataclysmic flood. He spoke to Abraham directly. He acted in a clearly supernatural way to overthrow Sodom and Gomorrah. But there is no record that God spoke directly to Joseph. Joseph had heard stories of the covenant from his father. Joseph had dreamed dreams. But God did not meet with Joseph or confront him. There is no record of God acting to set aside natural processes on Joseph's account. God blessed Joseph's efforts in Potiphar's house, in prison, and in his position as a ruler of Egypt. But it was through Joseph's own honesty and efforts that the Lord worked. In the unfolding of circumstances, Joseph saw the hand of God. But certainly others would have seen only luck—both good and bad. But Joseph's view is the true one. As we trace through the rest of the Old Testament, we'll see that God does sometimes intervene directly. But in most cases God works through the ordering of circumstances: through the natural progress of events whose sequence nonetheless is patterned to shape history according to God's plan and will."<sup>48</sup>

However, that is not a comforting reality for everyone. Opportunity, flourishing and purpose in life and work, when anchored and motivated by God, gives one peace; but not

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<sup>48</sup> Richards, Larry, and (Lawrence O. Richards. *The Teacher's Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987.)

necessarily everyone will have that same perspective. Joseph's brothers continued to struggle with the sovereignty of God in their situation and Joseph's position, in addition, to Joseph's forgiving heart:

Then his brothers also came to him, bowed down before him, and said, "We are your slaves!"<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?"<sup>20</sup> You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people.<sup>21</sup> Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.<sup>49</sup>

In work and life one has to occasionally or perpetually remind those around them that God is in control. Believers do not have to be afraid to walk in the Spirit or walk ethically in regard to decisions. When one lives in that place of trust, Romans 8:28-31 comes to life:

<sup>28</sup> We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.<sup>29</sup> For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.<sup>30</sup> And those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified.<sup>31</sup> What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us.<sup>50</sup>

This is a completely new way of living life; or one can argue that it's a throwback to the life of work and dependence on the Father that the redeemed were always meant to live that was lost at the fall but will be realized fully in the future kingdom.

Joseph's life is one of the great testimonies of what happens when one trusts God in the dark and unknown; when all one has to hold onto is the promise that He will not abandon His people. There are many who are being forced to work in various activities in the world of human trafficking. But God has a sovereign plan at work. As one works, he is continually working without a moments rest<sup>51</sup>. Just as with Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, and Joseph, they worked and

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<sup>49</sup> Genesis 50:18-21

<sup>50</sup> Romans 8:28-31

<sup>51</sup> Psalm 121:2-4

lived their lives, but God was always present and active. And when overwhelmed with the rotten fruits of the fall, such as trafficking, one can be assured that God in his own way and own time is dealing with the problem while He moves through His people to be salt and light.

### **Ruth: Moving and working towards a new life**

The death and separation of those closest is a reality that all must face in some capacity at some point in their life. It is saddening to hear stories of those who must endure that reality to the point where it becomes a norm. Even more tragic are those who do not have a family or someone close to them who they know or care about. Pain, tragedy, death, and separation are unfriendly guests that visit one from time to time. The impact of those guests are different for everyone. But what must be guarded against is allowing those aspects of the world to be definitive. No matter the cave, there is opportunity, one can flourish, and one can have purpose.

Ruth experienced the sting and pain of death after enduring the loss of her husband. One must not forget Naomi in this story. Yes, Ruth had to endure the loss of her husband, but her mother-in-law had to endure the loss of her husband and two sons. As God tends to do in the mist of pain in a fallen world, He pours out his goodness and grace; giving the opportunity to follow Him. Naomi began to move towards the goodness of God in the beginning of this story instead of allowing her grief and pain to define her:

Then Naomi's two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, also died. So the woman was left all alone-bereaved of her two children as well as her husband! So she decided to return home from the region of Moab, accompanied by her daughters-in-law, because while she was living in Moab she had heard that the Lord had shown concern for his people, reversing the famine by providing abundant crops.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ruth 1:5-6 NET

This was the opportunity that Naomi and all must take hold of. His goodness and grace is what initiates the believer's efforts. If one does not have that goodness to inspire and push them then they are left with nothing. There is no reason to move forward without his goodness. It was going to take work for Naomi and her daughter(s) to travel to Israel and move into a new life without any guarantee of work or provision; with only the goodness of God as their foundation.

One's work in any arena takes on a completely different dimension when one primarily depends on the goodness of God. He is the absolute by which one should build an ethic of work that serves as an effective rampart to unethical and apathetic behavior. Naomi could have succumbed to that apathy, which is just another dimension of having a lack of faith, but her initiative would set in motion another's faith to take hold of the same opportunity: "But Ruth replied, "Stop urging me to abandon you! For wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live. Your people will become my people, and your God will become my God."<sup>53</sup> Ruth's faith was significant in that she was born and raised outside the Israeli fold. Her love for her mother-in-law and faith is truly genuine. When left bear that's when one's faith is shown to be real or counterfeit. Ruth threw herself completely into the opportunity that God was providing:

**Ruth** had endured three entreaties of her mother-in-law to return home to Moab (vv. 11–12, 15). But she chose life with Naomi over her family, her national identity, and her religious idolatry. In one of the most beautiful expressions of commitment in all the world's literature she laced her future to that of Naomi. She confessed allegiance to the **people of Israel (your people)** and to the **God of Israel (your God)**. Here was a stirring example of a complete break with the past. Like Abraham Ruth decided to leave her ancestors' idolatrous land to go to the land of promise. And Ruth did it without the encouragement of a promise. In fact, she made her decision despite Naomi's strenuous encouragement to do otherwise. 1:17. Ruth's decision was so strong that it included reference to death and burial. She would stay with Naomi to death and beyond. To seal the quality of her decision, Ruth invoked judgment from Israel's God if she were to break her commitment of loyalty to her mother-in-law. Ruth's conversion was complete. The events that

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<sup>53</sup> Ruth 1:16 NET

followed show that her life matched her confession.<sup>54</sup>

God calls His people to Himself as one puts their faith in Him. Life as one experiences, and as one sees throughout the story of Ruth, is not easy. The life of faith involves work. And Ruth would find herself dropped into a field.

This chapter has spoken a lot about flourishing, along with the other items in the discussion. It is key to note, before moving further, that flourishing should not be equated to blind prosperity or the prosperity gospel. To be alive and to have all that one needs can be flourishing. Granted, being provided all that one needs may be relative in some cases. The westerner who has his basic needs met can be considered wealthy compared to a poverty stricken country of the global south. Regardless of those multiple arguments it must be understood that Ruth's faith led her to just the right field to have her needs met and begin down a road of flourishing. She was not sitting around waiting for something to drop in her lap, but she had the faith to work and see God provide. That is such an important truth to understand as believers. Faith that is active is alive. One does themself and the kingdom a disservice when they decide to just sit around and wait for God to drop grapes in their mouth. Ruth's active faith drove her to leave behind Moab with Naomi and work in a field to flourish. At every turn God met her faith:

<sup>5</sup> Boaz asked his servant who was in charge of the harvesters, “Whose young woman is this?”

<sup>6</sup> The servant answered, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. <sup>7</sup> She asked, ‘Will you let me gather fallen grain among the bundles behind the harvesters?’ She came and has remained from early morning until now, except that she rested a little in the shelter.”

<sup>8</sup> Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen, my daughter. Don’t go and gather grain in another field, and don’t leave this one, but stay here close to my female servants. <sup>9</sup> See which field they are harvesting, and follow them. Haven’t I ordered the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled.”

<sup>10</sup> She bowed with her face to the ground and said to him, “Why are you so kind to notice me, although I am a foreigner?”

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<sup>54</sup> Reed, J. W. (1985). Ruth. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 420–421). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>11</sup> Boaz answered her, “Everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband’s death has been fully reported to me: how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and how you came to a people you didn’t previously know. <sup>12</sup> May the LORD reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.”

<sup>13</sup> “My lord,” she said, “you have been so kind to me, for you have comforted and encouraged your slave, although I am not like one of your female servants.”

<sup>14</sup> At mealtime Boaz told her, “Come over here and have some bread and dip it in the vinegar sauce.” So she sat beside the harvesters, and he offered her roasted grain. She ate and was satisfied and had some left over.<sup>55</sup>

In verse 8 Ruth was instructed to not go into any other field to get grain but stay in Boaz’s field to get all that she needed. What must be magnified is that she had been working that whole time. She was noticed because she was working; her faith and works were going together. God was flourishing her life, which is seen in verse 9 and 12. The continuation of this blessing and flourishing is seen in verse 14, “she ate and was satisfied and had some left over.” The movement of God in one’s life cannot be anticipated but He will move as one walks with Him by faith. That principle can be encouraging in various forms of work today; situations, people, and organizations can be difficult but when one walks with God by faith, keeps working, and walks by the spirit rather than the flesh, God will show himself faithful before, during and after those difficult times.

As Ruth walked by faith and not by sight her purpose took shape: to glorify God and take part in God’s redemptive plan. First, one must understand that God is honored when believers trust Him in all circumstances: “His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man; But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.”<sup>56</sup> Doing grows out of faith. Ruth going to Naomi’s homeland and working in the

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<sup>55</sup> Ruth 2:5-14 HCSB

<sup>56</sup> Psalm 147:10-11

field was born out of the soil of faith. Trusting God with one's work and efforts, engaging and leading one's family, companies, teams, etc. glorifies God. Actions demonstrate one's belief that he/she is sustained in Him; then one is portraying a level of trust and worship that goes even deeper. One's purpose, if nothing else, is to demonstrate that level of trust and belief in God.

Ruth continued in faith. Her decision to leave with Naomi put her in a position and set a series of events in motion that placed her in the direct line of David and the Messiah: "Naomi took the child and placed him on her lap; she became his caregiver. The neighbor women named him, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi," They named him Obed. Now he became the father of Jesse – David's father!"<sup>57</sup> A Moabite woman through one act of faith was positioned into God's redemptive story of bringing forth the Messiah on earth.

Like Ruth, God has an overarching purpose for each believer to bring him glory but also a specific purpose that is unique to one's situational, historical, and individual context. No one person is more significant than the next. As one moves with God that overarching purpose and specific purpose will be realized in various circumstances.

### **Jesus: His work, our rest, His glory**

All roads lead to Christ. The opportunities, the flourishing, and the purpose that the people of God experienced and engaged in during the Old Testament period was leading to the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah. Every effort, battle, and struggle that Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Ruth experienced has absolutely no meaning apart from the final work of Christ. His work while on earth had different aspects to it with the purpose to bring God glory and rescue his sheep. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man but he worked and

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<sup>57</sup> Ruth 4:16-17 NET

humbled himself<sup>58</sup>, experienced hardship and was tempted and challenged<sup>59</sup>; yet he was without sin. He did the work of fulfilling the requirements of the law and the work of being the propitiation<sup>60</sup> for the world. He was perfect in all his work. No one can work their way to the mountaintop apart from His work. That is what defines the redeemed. Regardless of one's situation his work makes a way for anyone, no matter how dark their circumstance. By allowing his work to define the believer one has purpose that could not have been realized. There is no real purpose apart from God. One may, as many people do now, try to operate apart from submitting their lives to him. However, He formed man and none of what one does will ultimately matter if their lives and work are not submitted to Him. The believer's work will burn<sup>61</sup> and the unbeliever will be cast out<sup>62</sup>. He is the standard by which all else is measured, validated, or invalidated. First, while looking at the work of Christ, the study will start with Luke 4:42-44:

The next morning Jesus departed and went to a desert place. Yet the crowds were seeking him, and they came to him and tried to keep him from leaving them. But Jesus said to them, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, for that is what I was sent to do.' So he continued to preach in the synagogues of Judea.

Jesus was proclaiming the present and to come reality of God's kingdom rule on the earth through the Messiah<sup>63</sup>. This is important because Jesus' message is essential to His work. He did

<sup>58</sup> Philippians 2:5-11

<sup>59</sup> Hebrews 4:15

<sup>60</sup> 1 John 2:2

<sup>61</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:13-15

<sup>62</sup> Matthew 7:21-23

<sup>63</sup> Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible*. Biblical Studies Press, 2005.

do various miracles that demonstrated His love and power. The message of the kingdom is what gave all the other things validity. Of course, he did acts and works that no other person in history had accomplished. But the message is what would remove the charlatans who would attempt to counterfeit his work for their own ends. Jesus, however, brought the message of salvation, “I am the way, the truth and the life..”<sup>64</sup> This was the sword through every false religion and deception from the garden, to the tower of babel, till now that distorted the truth of God. Jesus work in preaching was giving clarity to those in darkness who for multiple generations had heard noise that tickled their ears but could not save them.

As seen in the verse Jesus was strategic in his work. He told the people that he had to leave and preach in other areas. That was the central part of his ministry. Everything else would feed off the message of the kingdom:

*For on this account am I sent.* These words deserve our attention: for they contain a declaration of his earnest desire to fulfill his office. But it will perhaps be asked, is it better that the ministers of the Gospel should run here and there, to give only a slight and partial taste of it in each place, or that they should remain, and instruct perfectly the hearers whom they have once obtained? I reply: The design of Christ, which is here mentioned, was agreeable to the injunction and call of the Father, and was founded on the best reasons. For it was necessary that Christ should travel, within a short period, throughout Judea, to awaken the minds of men, on all sides, as if by the sound of a trumpet, to hear the Gospel.<sup>65</sup>

They had to hear the gospel and that was the centrality of his efforts. Apart from that message they would have only seen the Son of Man doing great works, but it would not have had the substance that the message of the gospel gave. As Calvin stated in the above quote Jesus was “awakening” the minds of the people so that they would hear, know, and trust him. This is

<sup>64</sup> John 14:6

<sup>65</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Vol. 1, pp. 252–253). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

significant because this is the pattern that the disciples would follow. The Holy Spirit would accomplish miracles through them to further validate the message and believers in the present day go about engaging communities with the love of Christ to let people know that this message is worth every effort.

The work of the great commission revolves around the proclamation of the Word: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>66</sup> This work of proclamation, in some form, becomes the work of the redeemed regardless of one’s circumstances. There are women in one Asian mega-city who are coming out of prostitution by the power of the Holy Spirit and the impact of the gospel on their lives who want to share that message of the gospel in their communities with others who are trapped in that lifestyle. Why? Because the gospel is of supreme worth. Paul would further echo the important and essential work of proclaiming/sharing the gospel in Romans:

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”<sup>67</sup>

Believers have that treasure<sup>68</sup> and it must be shared with others. That was the essential part of Jesus’ work that clarified all the other work and demonstrated what his people should be taking part in.

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<sup>66</sup> Matthew 28:19-20 ESV

<sup>67</sup> Romans 10:14-15

<sup>68</sup> Matthew 13:44

The intensity of his work is further magnified in John 4:34: “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work.’” Jesus in the context of this passage is emphasizing that importance of the work that he is doing and, consequently, calling them into. Food is of lesser value and importance than the work that they are immersed in, “But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.””<sup>69</sup> That is the unapologetic intensity that the gospel should drive every believer towards. Jesus’ work had that kind of eternal significance. That is why believers must pick up on that intensity,

The doing of the will of God is a perpetual and sublime activity, a continuing, ceaseless purpose; while the completion of the work will be one consummating act, towards which all the daily doing of the will is a preparation, and of which, in some sense, every day we discern a prelibation and forthshadowing<sup>70</sup>

It is a ceaseless purpose that Jesus worked and that one is also restored to take part in. Whenever this work is ignored, communities are affected. When the work of the gospel ministry is not saturating a community or nation there will be repercussions that will affect the culture, population, government, etc. All other professions in those and other sectors that are not being encouraged to pursue a greater ethic of decision-making and operations will have further impacts on the community and eventually a nation as a whole. One cannot match Jesus’ perfection, but one must begin to work towards his same intensity for the kingdom to impact every sector.

Thus far this section has touched on the importance of Jesus work of proclamation, but one must not forget to highlight the full range of works that he did to advance the kingdom message. He was challenged in many facets of his ministry by different groups and doubters. But he moved forward because he knows better than anyone what is at stake. Those works were to

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<sup>69</sup> John 4:32

<sup>70</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *St. John* (Vol. 1, p. 172). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

point to Jesus and who He is. Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.”<sup>71</sup> Those who were healed, raised back to life, and blessed in other ways were experiencing the kingdom. Jesus’ work was opening the door to something new and completely beyond the norm. In that same passage Jesus was both emphasizing the importance of his works and informing the doubters that his works point to the truth of who He is as well as the truth of his message. Look at what he tells the Pharisees, “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”<sup>72</sup> The works are always meant to keep pointing His people back to Him and the Father. It is Jesus who was working to help them to realize this truth.<sup>73</sup> Jesus’ work or proclamation and good works was groundbreaking. The word groundbreaking is used because the “work” that would change history was approaching. Jesus had a clear mission with many aspects of work that made up that mission. Proclaiming, various good works of love, and training His disciples were all critical. However, those efforts would find their complete meaning in the work of bearing the sins of the world and enduring the wrath of the Father. His birth and ministry were all groundbreaking. His death and resurrection would be the work that would establish the foundation for something new.

The act that would complete the work that He came to do would not be easy. To bear the

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<sup>71</sup> *Jn 10:25-26 ESV*

<sup>72</sup> *Jn 10:37-38 ESV*

<sup>73</sup> Jesus says that in the final analysis, the *deeds* he did should indicate whether he was truly from the Father. If the authorities could not believe in him, it would be better to believe in the deeds he did than not to believe at all. Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible.* Biblical Studies Press, 2005.

sins of the world and the full wrath of God the Father is frightening if one really thinks about it. The perfect Son of God who had enjoyed perfect uninterrupted communion with the Trinity was undertaking a task that He told his disciples he was going to do, and which was foretold throughout scripture. One must not for a moment underestimate the magnitude of the work of the cross. If Jesus Christ is the pinnacle of opportunity and hope, as one looks to flourish and walk in purpose, then one must understand the price that was paid to provide the opportunity for communion with the Creator. Peace, joy, and reconciliation came at a high price.<sup>74</sup>

The strain of the final act is seen in Gethsemane:

<sup>32</sup> Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and He told His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” <sup>33</sup> He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be deeply distressed and horrified. <sup>34</sup> Then He said to them, “My soul is swallowed up in sorrow —to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake.” <sup>35</sup> Then He went a little farther, fell to the ground, and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. <sup>36</sup> And He said, “*Abba*, Father! All things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”<sup>75</sup>

Jesus approaching task drove Him to be “deeply distressed and horrified.” The Son of God! Eternal, perfect, and who commanded legions upon legions of angels felt like that! He went as far to say that if it were possible let this hour pass from Him. Caution should be considered before making an application from this text. The point to be understood here is the unique aspect of Christ’s work. History would be changed; generations of people would be saved and the urgency of the last days magnified because of the work that was going to take place. One must understand that Jesus was no slave being forced into a task that he did not choose or orchestrate. Slavery is a twisting of work and design as the *Imago Dei*. However, though he was entering a terrifying event, he was in complete control, “This is why the Father loves me – because I lay

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<sup>74</sup> Isaiah 53:5

<sup>75</sup> *Mark 14:32-36 HCSB*

down my life, so that I may take it back again. No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of my own free will. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it back again...”<sup>76</sup> The anguish and emotions that he felt one cannot begin to comprehend but the redeemed can worship Him because of His work. It was those actions that opened the doors and broke the back of the enemy for good. Adam and Eve may have succumbed to the enemy but as they moved forward, along with those who would follow, and then ultimately Christ would finish the job of crushing the head of the serpent.

It is the gospel that defines believers and the work that follows. It is the complete and completed work of the death, burial and resurrection that defines us: “For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received – that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.”<sup>77</sup> It is of first importance that one recognize and live out the freedom provided because of the gospel. The work included the beatings, the curses, the spit, the false accusations, the nails, the cross, the burial, and the resurrection. There were definitive steps that Jesus was undertaking to ensure that the completed work would be accomplished in order that one might enjoy the peace that Isaiah spoke about. His work proclaiming the gospel, healing the sick, raising the dead, and feeding thousands of people at a time found their purpose on the cross and through the resurrection. As with any company that takes steps to ensure that the best quality product is produced, Jesus took very calculated steps to ensure that his work was completed. Due to that, one can flourish as God always intended.

So, one’s work begins with belief. Yes, there are those who operate companies on

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<sup>76</sup> John 10:17-18

<sup>77</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

universal principles of ethics and social/economical stewardship apart from recognizing Christ. However, they will, at best, only scratch the surface of a mountain of treasure that God has for his people. Yes, there is a lot of work to do especially when it comes to the kingdom of God but there are two items that, ultimately, inform the believer's work and purpose: belief and rest. That does not quite match one's natural perspectives because many times one feels that they must do, do, and do some more. But one's work, as Christ said, starts and is saturated with belief in Him, "Jesus replied, "This is the work of God—that you believe in the One He has sent."<sup>78</sup> So what does one say about the work of the patriarchs, prophets, and other Old Testament figures who impacted the world? The answer could be that everything they did in and for the kingdom and their communities began with belief. They had to take God at his Word. And in Jesus everything is linked together, and one's belief is what points them in the right direction. This work is, as the verse states, of God. The individual must believe<sup>79</sup> in the one he sent. There is no other accomplishment or work that has any eternal value outside the covering of Christ. If one cannot do that than all the "good works" will still be pointless in the end.<sup>80</sup> It is even more important that as believers one recognizes the need to surrender and live by faith. If one cannot do that then

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<sup>78</sup> John 6:29 HCSB

<sup>79</sup> The interplay between working and believing is crucial to the concept of salvation in John. On the one hand, a person cannot earn acceptability with God by working for it. On the other hand, acceptability with God cannot be on the basis of "belief" in a mere theological formulation about God. Thus the noun "faith" (*pistis*) does not occur in John's Gospel. He chose instead to use only the verb "believe" (*pisteuein*), and he almost equated it with "obey" (cf. 3:36). Acceptability with God is a relationship God gives (6:27), therefore, and both believing and obeying are parallel ways one acknowledges dependence on God. As the Son always responded appropriately to the Father, people are to respond to the Son, who was sent by the Father (6:29). That is precisely the way John understood the call of Jesus to the Jews here. - Borchert, Gerald L. *John 1-11*. Vol. 25A. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996.

<sup>80</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:7

they will be ineffective as workers and ambassadors for the kingdom in various positions. It is only through the power of God that one can do anything: “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me.”<sup>81</sup> Remaining and believing in Him is essential. There is no being without Him and certainly no doing apart from Him. Not a degree, an investment, or a portfolio; belief and obedience are the keys to effective work as His people press on towards the goal and calling in Christ Jesus.

Believe, abide and then what? In all honesty one can continue to go through the daily grind. Only this time, one’s dependence is upon the God who has the trust of the believer. And unlike the world, the redeemed have the ability, during all that is being thrown at them, to rest. Jesus is not calling his church to do something he has not empowered them to accomplish. He did say go make disciples but in the same moment he says that He is always with his people. There is never a task that He assigns that He means to crush one with. It is always Him surrounding and going before. That is why he can say to not worry about burdens that may seem like they are too much: “Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”<sup>82</sup> His work took the crushing pressure off his people. There are and will be challenges in this fallen world but there is the reality and truth that one can rest in Him. Spas are nice but they have a temporary calming effect. A lot of times people take a vacation then come right back and put the oxen yoke back on their neck and drive across their field. That is not what Christ is calling his

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<sup>81</sup> John 15:5 HCSB

<sup>82</sup> Matthew 11:28-30

sheep to do. As one works, they can have rest, and as one is clothed with Christ, they can walk in love and obedience towards him. That is hard in any culture. In the West one has multiple distractions and finds themselves, at times, in the middle of a rat race. In other places there may just be the simple need to survive. Yokes come in different forms and in different circumstances. However, there is only one yoke that believers are called to take and that is the one from Christ. As one does that they can live, flourish, and have purpose.

### **The Future Kingdom and Work**

The redeemed of the Lord hope for it, pray for it, and dare say many others are desperate for that day when God will right the wrongs and set right all that has been twisted in history. Man's relationship between, others, between man and creation, man and God, between man and self and between man and work will be fully renewed. That is the hope and joy that all want and anticipate; to experience life and work as God intended. Work and flourishing continue to be marred by multiple antagonists; from Satan and his kingdom and the continued creeping ravages of sin. However, it is all temporary. There are different ways that one may look at the reality of work in the future kingdom. But here the study will shift to three aspects of that reality from the book of Revelation: 1) Reigning with Christ, 2) Bringing wealth, and 3) worship.

Believers are a kingdom of priests<sup>83</sup> operating in and representing the kingdom in a fallen world. However, one day believers will be a kingdom of Priests in a new environment minus the antagonists. Revelation speaks about this, "Blessed and holy is the one who takes part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of

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<sup>83</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”<sup>84</sup> Man’s purpose from the very beginning was to be fruitful and multiply. As the image bearers of God, Adam and Eve were meant to be, in a sense, His ambassadors in Creation, advancing His will and purposes throughout Creation. With the fall all that changed. History and the work that believers are supposed to take part in all crumbled as humans lost grip and sight of the purpose for which they were created. Now God, through Jesus Christ, has closed the chasm between His people and Himself to live out His purpose. That will be fully realized during the future kingdom. The recapturing of that purpose will involve reigning with Christ. Following the wrath of God being poured out on humanity, Revelation then takes the reader to a new reality. Something that is far and beyond what can be grasped at this time. The believer surviving amid poverty, or a warzone will reign with Christ as much as the believer who is living in affluence. In the context of chapter 20, the perspective of this thesis, is that there will be a literal thousand-year millennial reign. However, regardless of one’s view of the millennial reign the fact remains that the redeemed are re-positioned for the work of ruling with God. The position that was abdicated to the enemy will be given back. As rulers, believers will serve the King and advance His purpose throughout the universe.

Ruling is something that believers will do as an outflow of one’s relationship with God and co-heirs<sup>85</sup> with Christ. It is not enough to say that one will simply enjoy a ranch or a beach house in the future kingdom. As co-heirs and rulers there are responsibilities. Reigning involves working. A kingdom does not function with idol leaders. Yes, God has the power to set all things in motion and maintain it without anyone’s participation. On the other hand, God has chosen

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<sup>84</sup> Revelation 20:6

<sup>85</sup> Romans 8:17

otherwise; to position one as a full heir and participant in the kingdom. God does this because of His love and out of the abundance of His own eternal creative insight<sup>86</sup>. He, by creating man in His image and restoring him to a relationship with himself, is maintaining and expanding His purposes through His instruments. He finds joy in and of Himself while also finding joy in His people; His image bearers full of His creative power and wisdom to rule and reign.

The second dynamic of work in the future kingdom will involve bringing wealth<sup>87</sup> (or as some translations state honor) into the new city:

Now I saw no temple in the city, because the Lord God—the All-Powerful—and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>21:23</sup> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God lights it up, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>21:24</sup> The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their grandeur into it. <sup>21:25</sup> Its gates will never be closed during the day (and there will be no night there). <sup>21:26</sup> They will bring the grandeur and the wealth of the nations into it, <sup>21:27</sup> but nothing ritually unclean will ever enter into it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or practices falsehood, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. <sup>88</sup>

As one looks at this scripture one will see that there is a temple and a city. One must be careful about comparing and equating current realities with these future scenarios but what one can make some inferences that may be helpful. First, in the world today a lot of wealth and influence are concentrated in cities. The major financial sectors and political influencers are centralized in cities. This concept of bringing wealth or honor into the city is something that is seen now. Yes, within cities there is a lot of debauchery and abuse of people and resources. But one must understand that everything in the world has been affected by the fall; even the concept of a city, which God clearly approves due to the multiple references to the Holy/Eternal city that is to

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<sup>86</sup> Romans 11:33-36

<sup>87</sup> “An outstanding feature of the use of τ., as already shown in several passages, is its combination w. δόξα ... of earthly possessions τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν Rv 21:26 (τιμή concr.=an object of value: Ezk 22:25).” Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible*. Biblical Studies Press, 2005.

<sup>88</sup> Revelation 22:21-27 NET

come. So of course, cities are now polluted with all kinds of evil. But not the city that is to come.

To bring wealth presumes work that creates the wealth. Someone might argue that God could just create the wealth that can be given to individuals who can then bring it to the city; and He would still receive glory for that. However, as stated previously, God in His eternal creative insight has chosen to position His people to take part in His creative design and purposes for creation. God will find great joy and pleasure in the wealth that believers create as His image bearers. The wealth that one can create as His image bearers can range from several creative items as simple as a piece of art to items that go beyond current perceptions: not necessarily the generation of currency. That same wealth may involve intangible items also. Some translations render the word wealth as ‘honor.’ It can be assumed that both are relevant because to simply state that believers will bring honor to the city limits the creative potential and call to work that God has positioned one for. What that wealth and honor will be is not as essential as understanding that the redeemed will be involved in that continued task. To reign and to bring honor or wealth means that one will be working. There is no denying the fact that the redeemed will be participating in this glorious work as more than observers but also as active contributors. Granted God needs nothing from His creation but there is something to be said about Him rejoicing<sup>89</sup> over His people. Nor can one dismiss the creative gifts that have been given to His people from the time of the Tabernacle<sup>90</sup> and to the church<sup>91</sup>. Furthermore, at the tabernacle the people of God brought various offerings (wealth) to sacrifice to God. It honored Him to bring their wealth. In the New Testament believers still bring offerings and honor God through the

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<sup>89</sup> Zephaniah 3:17

<sup>90</sup> Exodus 31:3-11

<sup>91</sup> 1 Corinthians 12

application of those spiritual gifts.

God gives grace and blessings to His people. It also must be recognized that He gives gifts for His people to be even more effective in their work. Work and the utilization of those gifts magnify His glory also. When one applies the scriptures to their lives it becomes more impactful. One must also apply the gifts that He has given one in their workplaces. Bosses do not expect that their employees sit on their hands and just wait for everything to take care of itself at the job. They are expected to get up and work and use whatever skills they have to get the job done to enhance the company and advance its mission. How much more is that true for God and His people whom He has blessed with gifts to advance His mission in history. But one day when there is no longer the sin and the spiritual enemies of Heaven to deal with believers can fully operate in the gifts that He has called them to walk in while bringing the wealth into His city! No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.<sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.<sup>5</sup> And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever<sup>92</sup>

Work will find its complete fulfillment in unchallenged worship. Sometimes many people tend to look at worship as a separate act; almost as just a routine to do. But worship is work. Worship is more than just a one-day a week habit that one participates in. It is something that is transformative internally and effects the external or corporate/community environment. The work of worship is not something to be taken for granted. Worship now is during various struggles and entanglements that snatches one's attention and causes one to be distracted from that all important and central work. Believers will reign with Christ. They will also bring the wealth of the nations to the city. All that is centralized in the work of worship. One only reigns

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<sup>92</sup> *Revelation 22:3-5*

with Him and is able to bring the wealth of the nations because of His grace. All that is credited to Him. Without the work of worship then all other work and efforts may be in danger of taking on the stain of vanity. Even today, as creation awaits the New Heavens and the New Earth, if one works without worship, then they are in danger of taking credit and dismissing the God who called His people to a new life and empowers them to be effective in history.

In the coming eternal kingdom, worship will take on the depths and meaning that it was always meant to. The Psalmist writes, “Stop your striving and recognize that I am God! I will be exalted over the nations! I will be exalted over the earth!”<sup>93</sup> History is moving towards a time of unchallenged worship. The work of worship now may and does feel like a strain at times. It is because work, which includes worship, is being defied by the effects of the fall. However, as those effects dissipate the redeemed will be brought into the work of worship as the reference for all other work for the eons of eternity.

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<sup>93</sup> Psalm 46:10

## CHAPTER III

## LITERATURE REVIEW

ANALYZING AND INTERSECTION LITERATURE INVOLVING HUMAN  
TRAFFICKING, CONTEMPORARY SLAVERY, AND A THEOLOGY OF WORK

This review touches on various situations in the human trafficking arena, topics within theology of work and how, if at all, those subjects relate. To adequately deal with these varying subjects this section will use two strands to the literature review. The first strand involves the topic of contemporary slavery. This is a broad subject matter with multiple variables that can be discussed. However, the review will be looking at four specific categories regarding contemporary slavery: First, the sociological view that magnifies the plight of children caught in the world of trafficking and contemporary slavery. This can be one of the most heartbreakingly areas to discuss but it is necessary as one attempts to move forward in understanding and, ultimately, engaging this and many other issues. Second, with the first strand the review will take an important look into the economics of trafficking; specifically, the profits that are generated by trafficking. The third area will focus on the influence of capitalism, directly or indirectly, on the swelling issue of trafficking. The fourth category of the review, under the first strand, will discuss pertinent strategies; discussing two significant source materials to get a macro view of what major strategies have been implemented, have worked, and can be adopted in some way by other organizations or ministries.

The second strand that will be discussed, theology of work, will focus on select writings that highlight this topic and the integral part of the church and the life of the believer. There are

two goals of why the literature review will be divided into these various categories: 1) get a stronger grasp on the various issues and 2) try to connect the topics of contemporary slavery and theology of work. That is followed by a brief focus on the impact of hope as a goal for transformation and progress.

Contemporary slavery and a theology of work are two categories that are diametrically opposed to one another; one seeks to encourage the individual towards the Imago Dei and one's purpose to work, while the other seeks to destroy that Image and their purpose in Him. However, by highlighting this contrast this review can better move the discussion forward in healthy ways.

### **Children and contemporary slavery**

Children are affected on multiple levels in the world of trafficking. There are emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual scars that they deal with in their present circumstances that lead to more issues in the future. Children in trafficking is an epidemic that has spread across many, if not all, countries around the world. It is a historical reality. *Children in Slavery through the Ages* (2009) makes the crucial observation that child exploitation and slavery does not always get the same attention as other areas<sup>1</sup>. Gary Craig mentions (2010) that there over 210 million children in in some form of exploitation or child slavery<sup>2</sup>. That number has likely increased. In some instances, it is in one's face; in others, it is more hidden and underground. Regardless of one's knowledge on the reality of children and contemporary slavery, the reality is that it is prevalent and must be confronted. Two authors speak about this reality. David Batstone and

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, Gwyn, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C Miller, eds. *Children in Slavery through the Ages*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Craig, Gary, ed. *Child Slavery Now: A Contemporary Reader*. Portland, Ore.: Policy Press, 2010.

Michael McIlhombie in *Not for Sale* depict the dynamic of children in contemporary slavery as:

Indeed, more slaves live in bondage today than were bartered during four centuries of the transatlantic slave trade. No group has felt its impact more brutally than children in the underdeveloped nations. Slaveholders prey on the defenseless, and children so easily become vulnerable...UN surveys found 700,000 children forced into domestic labor in Indonesia alone, with staggering numbers as well in Brazil (559,000), Pakistan (264,000), Haiti (250,000), and Kenya (200,000).<sup>3</sup>

As has been discussed there are different areas of contemporary slavery or human trafficking.

The numbers above focus on domestic labor. However, there are children who are also being sexually exploited and abused in other ways. The numbers are significant, but the church can confront the problem. The church must be able to communicate a theology of work in the culture that portrays work as providing opportunity, human flourishing, and purpose. If children, even within forced domestic labor, are not being given opportunity to flourish and identify purpose then a part of a nation's emerging generation will have to deal with the next cycle of this bondage. Kara's concern and recognition of children is evident in his work, as it is in the former authors, but he also identifies some other dynamics that involve children and trafficking:

"Rescuing trafficked Children and reintegrating them into society is an extreme challenge.

Working with trafficked children is also dangerous, especially children who have been trafficked for organ harvesting."<sup>4</sup> Kara gives important data analysis and depicts real events in his writing.

Children alongside adults are a significant funnel of financial gain for those who control the trafficking industry. The prevalence of children in forced domestic labor is evidence enough. In addition, trafficked children can be a difficult target to reach due to their value for their handlers.

The writers of *Not for Sale* and *Sex Trafficking* both imply this in the above passages and is

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<sup>3</sup> Batstone and McIlhombie, *Not for Sale*, 6-7

<sup>4</sup> Kara, *Sex Trafficking: inside the Business of Modern Slavery*, 149

elaborated on further in other parts of their work. Domestic labor, of course, brings financial benefits to the recipients of the labor. Rescuing children from various levels of trafficking is going to hit someone's pocket; especially when it comes to organ harvesting. It is this financial component in conjunction with the ethical and spiritual components that must be addressed more aggressively by the church. Justin Healey pushes the financial impact and potential responses in *Child Labour* by highlighting companies that utilize standards of minimum age requirements<sup>5</sup>. All the authors do not come from the same perspective as this writer regarding the strategic necessity of the church to be more involved. Governments will only see a need, to an extent, to deal with contemporary slavery; especially when one starts to consider the reality of other countries and cultures.

Batstone and McIhonnlie (2010) highlight statistics that are important for one to understand due to the nature of the business of contemporary slavery. The business is big, it's growing and there seems to be no real challengers to stem its growth apart from a few bold governments and NGOs. Numbers like that do not emerge unless there are outside forces driving it, such as government corruption, fear instigated by the black market and criminal entities, or a history of general culture acceptance. International law has a place in this debate also as Holly Cullen (2007) states; "International law has a voice in effecting the various layers of society."<sup>6</sup> But as Kara states it's dangerous to reach and rescue children in this arena. It is because of the financial benefit that the business stakeholders must maintain the status quo. Each entity can

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<sup>5</sup> Healey, Justin, ed. *Child Labour*. Issues in Society, Volume 413. Thirroul, N.S.W.: Spinney Press, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Cullen, Holly. *The Role of International Law in the Elimination of Child Labor*. Procedural Aspects of International Law Monograph Series, V. 28. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007. doi:10.1163/ej.9789004162853.i-303.

only go so far to combat it because they are ultimately institutions that are susceptible to the very things they want to combat like corruption, fear, greed, etc. However, one may argue that the church is susceptible to those same items. In one sense the people who form the church must be cautious and can fall into that trap. But the church is the one institution that can effectively engage the full spectrum of issues by mobilizing those skilled in different areas; including the often overlooked and most important item, which is spiritual. The numbers are significant. Much like the numbers and statistics one can identify regarding poverty, or another degenerative societal challenge, the government an NGO or group of NGOs cannot be effective in fully dealing with the problem. Kara's analysis of the dangers maybe correct, but, his analysis if read alone, apart from the counter context of the scriptures may prevent one from doing anything or the bear minimum in case they wanted to do more. More must be done if one is to look at this epidemic and ask: what is next?

The numbers can be shocking and frustrating that are depicted in *Not for Sale* or the layer of trafficking of children that involves organ harvesting as depicted by Kara. Furthermore, the challenge of reintegrating them back into society is another significant challenge but also a potential opportunity. The church must engage the opportunity to reach this population in forced domestic labor and ultimately contemporary slavery. The church has the networks already in place that are in their local body and grounded in their community. These networks encompass people from various backgrounds. They usually work outside the church, which leads to connections that can lead to engaging those children in domestic labor and or other forms of contemporary slavery. The spirit of God is there to guide the church along in this endeavor. And the church has been uniquely positioned to be flexible and fluid enough to confront the fear and danger. Reintegration should be the highest priority of the local church second only to the

restoration of their lives through the gospel. Then the church can wade into those shadows in their backyard or across their borders to instigate transformation.

### **Economics of Contemporary Slavery and Human Trafficking: Profits**

Outside of the definitive spiritual aspect of this problem, driving contemporary slavery or the more commonly used description human trafficking, are the burgeoning profits. The various underground entities, private companies and in some instances, governments utilize or overlook the reality of human trafficking. The money that is made cannot be dismissed. The International Labour Office (2014) pinpoints the fact that multiple factors such as poverty, literacy and even migration<sup>7</sup> can be a funnel that pulls individuals into that world of shadow profits. Louise Shelley (2010) depicts this in her work Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective: “Current estimates by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime place human trafficking as the second most profitable form of transnational crime after the sale of drugs and rank it more profitable than the sale of arms.”<sup>8</sup> Reaching into the billions of dollars a year, human trafficking is an economic reality that will have to be challenged on multiple levels. Greed and abuse have caused the destruction of many lives in the arena of contemporary slavery throughout the years and this present time is no different. Kara, Shelley and Batstone recognize that there is a complex economic web that touches on trafficking. Batstone states:

Like any other commercial market, the slave trade is driven by the dynamics of supply and demand. Criminal agents make handsome profits off unpaid labor: if you don’t pay your workers, it is cheaper to produce goods or, in the case of sex slavery or domestic servitude, to

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<sup>7</sup> International Labour Office. *Profits and Poverty : The Economics of Forced Labour*. Geneva: International Labour Office, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Shelley, Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective,7

offer valued human services. Due to these financial advantages, slaveholders can compete successfully in almost any market. The profit margins will rise as high as the demand will bear.<sup>9</sup>

The slave trade is not about empowering the victims who are forced to take part in the work. One cannot expect the majority of those participating in this work to see any type of formal profit. One can contrast that by those who choose the profession of prostitution. However, the truth is that one can never truly flourish in that lifestyle as God has intended. There is no flourishing in those conditions with or without a profit being made. Being forced to participate in that kind of work is unethical and the work itself is unethical. And, ultimately, the profits that are acquired serve to perpetuate an unethical system.

Combating this human tragedy on an international scale must consider this economic titan that is not going away without God's people creatively engaging the issue through His spirit.<sup>10</sup> Kara (2017) in his work *Sex Trafficking* further expands on the profits garnered in this industry:

The fundamental reason that sex slavery is immensely profitable is because of the lengthy duration of enslavement. In economic terms, this means that the unit costs of operating a sex-slave business are minor because they are amortized across thousands of profit generating sex acts during years of enslavement. The totality of the above reasoning leads to the most important premise of this book: the two measures most likely to invert the risk-reward economics of sex slavery, and thereby reduce aggregate demand for sex slaves, are raising the costs of being caught and shortening the average duration of enslavement.<sup>11</sup>

As was stated, Batstone, Shelley and Kara recognize the economic reality of sex trafficking and other forms of contemporary slavery. Batstone emphasizes the growth of profits coming from the massive numbers who are working and not being paid. Kara in turn focuses on the duration of enslavement that instigates those growing profits. However, those are parallel reasonings.

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<sup>9</sup> Batstone, Not For Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade—and How We Can Fight It,<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Ephesians 3:20

<sup>11</sup> Kara, Sex Trafficking: inside the Business of Modern Slavery,215

Unpaid labor over a long duration would cause an increase in profits with a lot business. Batsone also highlights the supply and demand side of the situation. Stemming that will require government involvement. But engaging the culture that breeds that kind of activity is a completely different challenge that will require a scalpel that only the church can truly use; because the issue of sin must, at the very least, be acknowledged which is not so much done by some of the before mentioned authors. However, Richard Higginson (2017) in *Faith, Hope & The Global Economy: A power for good* states: “Sin impacts the global economy most blatantly in industries that prey on human nature at its weakest and worst. According to one credible estimate, prostitution is a \$400 billion global industry...”<sup>12</sup> From the government side Kara states what should happen: ‘raising the costs of being caught and shortening the average duration of enslavement.’ This can be difficult but not impossible. If one were to capture human traffickers what kinds of “costs” are being considered? Throwing them in jail is one option. However, it is not, ultimately, dealing with the far-reaching economic web that makes up human trafficking. There are NGOs in place and government sponsored entities alongside of law enforcement that are targeting those who are manipulating the industry. However, one must come back to the church in concert with those snipping the dense economic issue.

Furthermore, how does one deal with state-imposed slavery, those working and not being compensated as domestic servants? The topics of opportunity, human flourishing, and purpose have been discussed. Those are items that are highlighted in this thesis as being ways of describing a theology of work. Once embraced, life takes on a completely new meaning and truth. Those who are being abused, forcefully trafficked, or who have chosen self-imposed trafficking can be impacted if they are restored through the Spirit of God and live lives that

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<sup>12</sup> Higginson, Richard. *Faith, Hope & The Global Economy: A Power for Good*. IVP, 2012, 66

flourish and have purpose. It is hard to say the following because those people who perpetuate that business can cause significant trauma. But the agents of the business must also be targeted for restoration. If one thinks about it, every generation that the church has engaged has seen entire systems of governments, economies, and cultures transformed. That was the result of reaching those who were the oppressed and those who were the oppressors. Whereas there may be some agreement with Kara that there must be punishment one must also take a challenging step in another direction to emphasize to those who are controlling the business about the opportunity that they have to flourish outside of a destructive trafficking operation. In addition, Batstone emphasized the duration of enslavement as being the chief issue of the slave trade. One combats that by not only looking to assist those who are broken from the sexual abuse but by also engaging those who are spiritually broken as the agents of the industry. This is a radical call for the church that was touched on in the previous section. If there are multiple orgs, government entities and others who are engaging the problem, yet it is still growing, then how can one rethink some approaches? The church either needs to have a seat at the table of that discussion or better yet serve as the platform and catalyst to ask how best to engage the veracity of that economic web.

### **Economics of Human Trafficking: Influence of Capitalism**

Capitalism is a term that has received a lot attention from multiple sectors of society in various international contexts. The past century has put capitalism on center stage in multiple debates and even conflicts. Whether one agrees, disagrees, understands, or misunderstands the precepts and goals of capitalism there is no denying that this concept will continue to be influential in various communities. Directly or indirectly capitalism has entered the conversation

surrounding human trafficking or contemporary slavery; as one will see, some credit capitalism with fueling prosperity while some blame it for some of society's most shameful realities. This thesis is not faulting capitalism. On the other hand, capitalism expands the conversation. The entanglement of capitalism and trafficking is a reality that developed in the middle east<sup>13</sup> as Johan Mathew describes. India, where sex trafficking is undeniably prevalent, has been a country that has benefited from the injection of capitalism. Yes, poverty is still a significant reality in conjunction with human trafficking but, as Malloch states in *Doing Virtuous Business*, the economy has benefited from capitalist principles:

The giant economies of China and India have rather dramatically turned toward capitalist economic methods...In that process, China and India have raised more than a half billion people out of poverty with in the span of only thirty years. Never before have so many people emerged out of hopeless lives in so short a time.<sup>14</sup>

Before jumping on board with others who give overwhelming blame to capitalism for social ills one must remember the economic remedies that it has provided for many people.

On the other hand, criticism is warranted in some instances. Kara would argue that capitalism has contributed heavily to the trafficking problem. Granted, realities such as globalization and other factors have played a major role in the burgeoning situation of trafficking, how much credit can be given it? Kara argues:

Several factors have contributed to the supply of potential slave labor throughout history, including poverty, bias against gender or ethnicity, lawlessness, military conflict, social instability, and economic breakdown. Each factor was important to the accretion of the supply of contemporary sex slaves. Each factor was also directly exacerbated by the sweeping

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<sup>13</sup> Mathew, Johan. "Margins of the Market: Trafficking and Capitalism Across the Arabian Sea." Dissertation, University of California Press, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Malloch, Doing Virtuous Business: The Remarkable Success of Spiritual Enterprise, Loc200

phenomenon of economic integration of the world through the unfettered profusion of American-style capitalism.<sup>15</sup>

Both authors make very strong points, but they are looking at the situation from their particular lens. As Malloch stated, capitalism has undeniably lifted many out of poverty but what must not be forgotten is that it may have provided the platform for trafficking to flourish. However, with any human created device designed to encourage flourishing, it can be twisted to instigate discord. Barnes zeros in on this: “In order for an economic system to be healthy, and for people to flourish, they must have faith in the system and hope for the future. Corruption, injustice, and fraud all breed cynicism and hopelessness, but honesty, justice, and integrity breed hope and confidence.”<sup>16</sup> So, yes, capitalism when undergirded and influenced by corruption, injustice, and fraud will lead to some of the injustices that Kara is concerned about. It must be restated that one must be careful not to paint a broad brush on capitalism. The very thing that might have influenced some of the social ills may very well lead to some of the solutions. The opportunities that can be realized through an inclusive capitalist<sup>17</sup> model that Bruno Roche and Jay Jakub highlight in *Completing Capitalism* bears out this potentiality. Furthermore, that hope and confidence that Barnes states can be a catalyst towards the development of real platforms of opportunity. Continuing, one will see in the next section how providing economic opportunities for those coming out of trafficking is one essential component that has been identified to prevent the cyclical movement of those who come out of trafficking from returning to it. It is capitalist principles that encourage some of the development in the communities and the emergence of job

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<sup>15</sup> Kara, Sex Trafficking: inside the Business of Modern Slavery,23

<sup>16</sup> Barnes, Redeeming Capitalism, Loc2689

<sup>17</sup>Roche, Bruno, Jay Jakub. Completing Capitalism: Heal Business to Heal the World. Oakland, CA, 2017,143

opportunities to assist them. In addition, Kara lumps globalization<sup>18</sup> with capitalism in much of his critiques about capitalism. There may be the danger of mischaracterizing the role of capitalism if there is not equal and adequate attention given to other crucial factors that instigate contemporary slavery and trafficking. The injustices that might have emerged because of globalization must be confronted; including the factors that gave rise to them. On the other hand, one's understanding of those factors, good and bad, must be held in their proper perspective; in doing that, one can come to a more accurate understanding of the particularities that have given rise to the current issue of trafficking. Kara is much more specific when he discusses the destructive policies of the IMF<sup>19</sup> on Eastern Europe. They were attempting to jumpstart those nations' economies in the 1990s but in turn negatively affected some of the social safety nets and government programs that many were depending on. It would be fair to assume that many who make economic decisions do not consider future scenarios that may emerge or future realities that will have to be confronted. Barnes and Malloch are touching on this; when businesses and economies operate on a level that pursues virtue, and does not dismiss wisdom, then there can be much more of a macro level benefit for the community. However, if virtue and wisdom are not prescribed then one goes into some of the situations that Kara identifies.

Regardless of one's position on capitalism, what cannot be denied is that there are positive and negative methods of building and influencing an economy. One sees the effects of both pathways in the world. Furthermore, those trapped in the trafficking community need opportunities to flourish and live in purpose with the central figure of Christ as the beginning and end of holistic opportunity. As far as building a financial foundation that eliminates dependence

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<sup>18</sup> Kara, Sex Trafficking: inside the Business of modern-slavery,25

<sup>19</sup> Kara, Sex Trafficking: insider the business of modern-slavery,26

on trafficking then one must provide various opportunities for them to work in environments that are flourishing.

### **Strategic Perspectives to Combat Trafficking**

There are multiple organizations and strategic approaches to dealing with trafficking and various forms of contemporary slavery in the world. There are debates about the rescue model and emergent discussions regarding the right that those individuals have to participate in those activities if they choose. One example is Jennifer Suchland who desires to shift the argument to economic and social causes to build new approaches to confront the problem<sup>20</sup>. A holistic model is best when confronting this challenge. There must be restoration and tools that can allow those individuals to grow out of the environment of bondage spiritually, psychologically, and economically.

A recurring theme in combatting trafficking is the necessity to provide economic platforms that will allow those targeted individuals to work themselves out of those destitute situations. In *Not For Sale* Batstone states, “Programs that encourage girls to escape the sex trade but leave them poor and jobless do not yield long-term success stories. The girls remain vulnerable to being trafficked once again.”<sup>21</sup> As the church focuses on sharing the gospel, which it should, one also must mobilize available human and financial resources. Furthermore, Byun emphasizes this reality of meeting not only the spiritual but also the economic and physical needs in order to transform their lives in other ways: “Evangelism is priority, but meeting the

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<sup>20</sup>Suchland, Jennifer. *Economies of Violence : Transnational Feminism, Postsocialism, and the Politics of Sex Trafficking*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Batstone, Not For Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade—and How We Can Fight It,35

physical needs of others in love is also needed so that they will not only hear about God's love, they will see it in action too. James 2:17 states that if faith does not manifest in caring for the needs of others, then it is dead.”<sup>22</sup> The act of love that Byun emphasizes contributes heavily to the long-term success that Batstone mentions. If one cannot do this well and do it consistently then there is the danger of becoming irrelevant in this fight. And the church does have and has played a part directly and indirectly. Niklas Potrafke provides research (2016) that shows nations that have a significant Christian influence tend to address trafficking more strongly<sup>23</sup>. Venter and Semmelink echoes the impact of the church by magnifying Luke 4:16-21 as a foundation for a Christian response.<sup>24</sup> Whether one wants to admit it or not human trafficking is part of the gates of hell that the church must storm and love is the key.

This approach to combating trafficking through acts of love and encouraging economic, social and educational empowerment is further displayed by an organization operating in Latin America called “Generacion” that Batstone highlights; when speaking of the primary leader of the organization: “She often has to negotiate with public school principals who do not want to accept street kids into their classrooms. Finally, Generacion wants to give its youth, as they move into adolescence, meaningful jobs that offer a positive work experience.”<sup>25</sup> The purpose of this

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<sup>22</sup> Byun, Justice Awakening: How You and Your Church Can Help End Human Trafficking,<sup>89</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Potrafke, Niklas. “Policies against Human Trafficking: The Role of Religion and Political Institutions.” *Economics of Governance* 17, no. 4 (2016): 353–86. doi:10.1007/s10101-016-0181-5.

<sup>24</sup>Venter, Marieke, and Willem Semmelink. “Human Trafficking and the Church : Towards a Biblical and Practical Christian Response.” *Conspectus : The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary*29, no. 1 (2020): 61–77

<sup>25</sup> Batstone, Not For Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade—and How We Can Fight It,<sup>205</sup>

research is not to argue that just providing jobs or educational opportunities is all that is needed to assist those in that situation. Those factors are needed but the work goes deeper than that. The psychological scars must be addressed and above everything else the spiritual scars cannot be ignored. But just freeing them is not enough. From a historical perspective when in the post-civil war south what happened with the disenfranchisement and lack of opportunities for minorities who were loosed from slavery. Consider migrants who flee destitute or violent situations. There are more examples, but the point is that further abuse and the perpetuation of that mindset can continue if not addressed adequately. One of the most effective ways to do that is to provide real opportunities to flourish and have purpose. That is what meaningful work does for any person in any circumstance; because that is how men and women have been designed. Provide or direct them into real opportunities that will restore their God given design to work with integrity versus the destructive nature of trafficking that twists one's God designed purpose for work.

When discussing strategy there are different approaches. Thus far the focus has been primarily the economic platforms that can provide necessary support for long-term flourishing. However, to truly maximize the impact of those initiatives the church must be part of those efforts at the macro planning level as well as at the micro execution level. If born-again believers truly believe they are part of the body of Christ, the church; the one institute that can bring not only transformation to a community but the only group that carries the message of the restorative, saving gospel then one must point their voices towards this problem, "Trafficking today is one of the darkest evils in existence. It's the writer's opinion that part of the reason why it has become such an enormous problem is because the church has ignored and avoided it for far

too long.”<sup>26</sup> When the church is absent from a problem it does not get better. The government or other organizations may step in to deal with the problem as best they can but the hard truth is that trafficking is a deeply spiritual issue. And the church is best suited to deal with it if one believes the church has the exclusive message of freedom and salvation. As the church answers its call to proclaim the gospel it is only natural that there will be those who arise within the church who are willing to contribute resources and time to working in areas such as economics, education, or other means of empowerment. As the church steps up there will be significant progress but also strident resistance. The enemy will not just allow the church to raid his safe houses where he holds sway over a system of abuse and dis-empowerment. One can be confident knowing that the Spirit is aware of what is going on. That is why there is such an emphasis here for the church community to join hands more closely to pierce the tragic situation of contemporary slavery.

### **Second Strand: Highlights on a Theology of Work**

The faith and work movement has experienced spurts of momentum and has challenged the church to recognize this all-essential part of the Christian life. Luther and Calvin would refocus the church’s Biblical mandate in this area and contemporary authors have once again reminded the culture that the church and believers are not passive participants in the daily grind of work but active agents in flourishing inwardly and within the community.

In *God at Work* Ken Costa puts it well after identifying the professions of various Biblical figures that he came to the realization, “God was interested in every aspect of my life.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Byun, Justice Awakening: How You and Your Church Can Help End Human Trafficking,94-95

<sup>27</sup> Costa, Ken. *God At Work: Live Each Day with Purpose*. Nashville, TN, 2016,10

Costa through his book weaves and expands on this theme to highlight the fact that God is purposefully on the move in one's life and work. Wolf (2001) in *Work in the Spirit* hammers the need for believers to work as they have been gifted and that work that is done according to the will of God honors Him versus some vague calling<sup>28</sup>. As with many of those who are on the forefront of this discussion there is the need to liberate the minds of many Christians who separate their everyday work from God's purpose and design.

Tom Nelson would echo the above sentiments, in *Work Matters*, when he says, "Our present vocational stewardship ought to be our primary focus of faithfulness...it is important that we bloom where we are presently planted."<sup>29</sup> Aligning the vertical life with the horizontal life should not be a cause of conflict but should allow one to adequately apply Proverbs 3:5-6 as the believer trusts the Lord (vertical) and allows Him to direct their life (horizontal). A healthy theology of work does not limit God's movement within what one may identify as mundane routines but allows the Spirit to be constantly transforming: "To not walk in the Spirit in the workplace where God has called you is to live a life of spiritual impotence and carnality."<sup>30</sup> In *The Economics of Neighborly Love* Nelson further expands on the primary fruit of our theology of work, flourishing in our environments and communities. Speaking from Ephesians 4:28: "Do we grasp what Paul is saying? The gospel not only addresses our greatest impoverishment, which is spiritual impoverishment resulting from our ruptured relationship with God, but also

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<sup>28</sup> Wolf, Miroslav. *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Nelson, Tom. *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work*. Wheaton, IL 2011,181

<sup>30</sup> Nelson, *Work Matters*,113

empowers us to address economic impoverishment in neighborly love.”<sup>31</sup> Nelson hammers this critical point throughout this book; and a healthy theology of work should aim to address impoverishment and brokenness through the creative gifts and resources of believers.

In that same breath, as the above-mentioned resource, Ewest in the book, *Faith and Work*, as well as Ewest’s co-authored book with Buszka, *Integrating Faith and Work: Individual, Occupational, Organizational Influences and Strategies* continues to look at examples to apply those principles to the workplace. The former book by Ewest looks at the macro impact of the faith and work movement on culture and institutions. One can observe the influence of Christianity and the “protestant ethic” throughout western culture. The holistic impact as Ewest argues has had that macro impact. Alongside Buszka, Ewest looks at other practical approaches for individuals to integrate their faith to the workplace. Because if one knows their profession and knows their faith yet is unable to integrate, this writer is of the opinion that the vocational experience/calling will be missed. That is the goal of the faith and work approach. To make greater sense of one’s vocation in light of faith in conjunction with the ability and desire to bless those in one’s community. It is one’s faith rooted in a Biblical view which allows the follower of Christ to maximize their influence and impact as God works through the believer. Barrera (2017) expands on applications from the scripture of economic life in light of scripture<sup>32</sup>. God moves through the life of the believer and the church to effect all of life and society; especially the area of economics.

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<sup>31</sup> Nelson, Tom. *The Economics of Neighborly Love: Investing in Your Community’s Compassion and Capacity*. Intervarsity Press 2017,15

<sup>32</sup>Barrera, Albino. *Biblical Economic Ethics: Sacred Scripture's Teachings on Economic Life*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017.

However, there is the continued tension that there are different approaches or perspectives within the faith and work or theology of work arena. Timothy Keller touches on some of the above topics and acknowledges in *Every Good Endeavor* the reality that there is a healthy diversity<sup>33</sup> in the faith and work discussion. This diversity must not be ignored. Applying the scriptures to push for community transformation, justice, ethics in business, medicine, etc. are all worthy causes, in the context of scripture. Even the Business as Mission movement can be argued as being an interpretation of how one seeks to bring flourishing to a community. That also is an endeavor to bring blessing to a community. This diversity will be needed as the church looks to impact the new emerging realities that are depicted in Schwab's *Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Currency, production, AI, and a variety of other ethical items will be debated in the coming decades. It will be difficult but there are many who are attempting to fill the gap. Rae and Wong (2004) have attempted to lay out models in the past for ethical decision making<sup>34</sup>. The diversity of giftings, which impacts the diversity of theological thought within the faith and work community, will be needed to effectively speak into the different challenges that this new era is bringing to the front porch of the church. Challenges that are either positive or nefarious. One of those many nefarious challenges will be the constantly evolving reality of sex work, trafficking, and contemporary slavery.

### **Theology of Work in Action: Engaging an Industry and Inspiring Hope**

What does a theology of work mean for someone trapped in human trafficking? What does it mean for the traffickers? How does a theology of work apply to the prostitute who has

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<sup>33</sup> Keller, Timothy. *Every Good Endeavour*. London 2012,3

<sup>34</sup> Rae, Scott B, and Kenman L Wong. *Beyond Integrity: A Judeo-Christian Approach to Business Ethics*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

chosen to take on that lifestyle in order to survive? The argument can be made that a theology of work is at the heart of that answer. Theology of work applies to every context as either a description of a healthy work environment that honors God or as a critique of a destructive environment.

There are different angles to think through regarding a theology of work. At the macro level when one considers each believers' responsibility towards work one can turn to Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Building on that one can highlight Dr. Lindsey's statement in Delivering Purpose and Meaning: "Purpose becomes the gauge by which the value of other tasks is measured."<sup>35</sup> One must be careful about reading an entire theology into that statement but there is no denying that the overtones of theology are there. What is one's purpose in work? If it's just to get by, get a check apart from a full effort that, 'works for the Lord and not just human bosses' then the quality and fruits of that work will not be as significant. Now can one still display a virtuous attitude coupled with honest work apart from faith in Christ? Yes. But the argument will continue to be made here that the full and complete experience of virtue and a virtuous work experience can only be fully realized in Christ. As for the former point, virtuous conduct in business motivated by common grace can influence, in a positive way, the macro structure and consequently the various levels of an organization or business:

"For years I've paid close attention to something that fascinates me-the ability of people of religious faith and spiritual commitment to make great success of their businesses. Success comes to them, I believe, because faith changes business for the better, just as it changes lives."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> McMillan, Lindsay. Delivering Purpose and Meaning,6

<sup>36</sup> Malloch, Doing Virtuous Business: The Remarkable Success of Spiritual Enterprise, Loc228

If one's purpose is to integrate the best of their religious faith that encourages human flourishing into their work, then that gauge expands to include not only profits but the nurturing of human capital and resources. In the context of human trafficking this would obviously mean a complete 180 degree change of the business. In other more common cases the gauge can begin to measure more significant items that impact the business and the people.

In most if not every case the taking on of a virtuous approach to business can also affect one of the most important gauges of success, financial gains. Marion Carson magnifies this point by referencing Adam Smith who argued in the *Wealth of Nations* that free waged labor is superior to slaved labor<sup>37</sup>. Shelley and Bain (2015) continue with this idea in stating the benefits of the legitimate economy over that illegitimate economy<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, as was highlighted in an earlier chapter, the bold decision to integrate virtuous characteristics in a business model has proven to widen profits, "Virtual enterprise accomplishes two enormously important things: it makes the world in which we live a better place, and it makes our business far more successful, more profitable than they otherwise would be."<sup>39</sup> This can seem risky for some but as one steps up that ladder then they get closer to their design and purpose to work; a design and purpose that is in each person's very make-up because the God who designed each individual is the One who is constantly working for the greatest of ends; His glory and fame.

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<sup>37</sup> Carson, Marion. *Human Trafficking, The Bible, and the Church*. Oregon: Cascade Books 2016,29

<sup>38</sup> Louise Shelley, and Christina Bain. "Human Trafficking: Fighting the Illicit Economy with the Legitimate Economy." *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 1 (2015): 140–44. doi:10.17645/si.v3i1.215.

<sup>39</sup> Malloch, Loc310

As one pursues that high calling of His glory and fame in their lives, one's work is the greatest testimony of their desire to magnify His glory and fame. Whether it's the mundane routines, disappointing jobs, or a difficult boss one is to be the light in those arenas. In A Kingdom Perspective on Labor Witherington says: "Calling, charisma, gifting, vocation, ministry, and work are all interrelated things in the new order of God."<sup>40</sup> A correct theology of work does not see life compartmentalized. Everything is integrated under the umbrella of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. One's work is one of the more significant items under that umbrella because that is where each person can demonstrate their trust in God and dependence on Him as they make decisions involving how one interacts with others, generate profits, etc. For the arena of human trafficking a healthy theology of work must be interjected into the communities that provide platforms for the industry, law enforcement and politicians that overlook the industry, governments and educational entities that are unwilling to provide opportunities and most importantly churches that ignore that neglected group. And the Father's reach is not too short to accomplish that as Ken Costa pinpoints: "However, godless a workplace may appear, it is not beyond his reach."<sup>41</sup>

The fact that this profession is not beyond God's reach, the possibility of sparking hope with those individuals involved in the trafficking broadly and sex work specifically is a powerful first step that can open doors to liberation. Kary Storm and Michele Rickett portray stories of hope from women and girls from various cultures. They point to hope by stating: If a newborn buried alive by her father in India can have a future, why not a tossed-away girl in Tibet or Mali or China? Why not a forgotten child in Japan or a girl trafficked and sold in Nepal?

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<sup>40</sup> Witherington,13

<sup>41</sup> Ken Costa, God at Work,33

Why not a little one languishing in Sudan or Iran or Iraq? We are convinced that every unwanted girl has the potential of a different ending to her story.<sup>42</sup>

No matter the situation hope is needed. When on talks about the different areas depicted above it is important hold onto the belief that there can be change. Storm and Rickett also describe practical steps one can take to make an impact. Furthermore, Chuck Swindoll's book *Hope Again* points the reader to the reality that Hope is not some phantom feeling but something that we need in life, "Hope isn't merely a nice option that helps us temporarily clear a hurdle. It's essential to our survival."<sup>43</sup> The target group of women in this research are daily looking to survive. Unfortunately, sex work is the avenue of survival that has trapped them. However, the skills primer is aimed to ignite a greater sense of hope that realizes that there is a possibility that they can move out of that environment. Hope is "essential" for this group. If anyone is in an adverse situation hope is the turning point that can lead to true change and transformation. Of the four questions that Larry Crabb posts in his book, *Hope When You are Hurting: Answers to Four Questions Hurting People Ask*, writes as the final question, "What Can I Hope for?" This is critical because no matter what is discussed, the amount of information that is passed on, or resources that are shared that lingering question is still present; and it centers around hope. Is there hope that life will get better, that my situation will change, that I can have a future where I am not be exploited? Those are honest questions. It is hope that brings about the pivot towards a new direction.

The authors in this review are above all else hopeful whether their message speaks broadly to the aspects of the economy, workplace, or trafficking. Regardless of the focus the fact

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<sup>42</sup> Strom, Kay Marshall, and Michele Rickett. 2014. *Forgotten Girls: Stories of Hope and Courage* Expanded ed. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 16

<sup>43</sup> Swindoll, Charles R. 1996. *Hope Again*. Dallas: Word Pub.

is that the God who created the work/cultural mandate must be welcomed into those spheres in order that there may be transformation. For a theology of work to, ultimately, be relevant for those who choose or who are forced into the world of prostitution and trafficking it must be an active process not a static conversation.

## CHAPTER IV

PROJECT DESIGN: IGNITING HOPE TOWARDS LIBERATION THROUGH AN  
INTEGRATED SKILLS TRAINING**Why an Integrated Biblically-Based Soft Skills Training?**

Much has been covered regarding some of the macro issues involved in the international trafficking crisis in conjunction with shaping a perspective on a theology of work. Moving forward the task will specifically involve building the bridge that can potentially serve as a connection point to provide hope for the group of women in the sex industry in the targeted city. The development of the training aims to walk a tightrope between providing skills that will be broadly beneficial for their population while also avoiding the mistake of projecting upon them some “outsider” bias regarding what one might think they need. The desire is to see them flourish into their God-designed purpose and dreams; not propose some program for them to follow. To better serve them the effort must be put forth to provide a step that will build hope for them in their current situation. If there are any hidden goals it is that as they flourish in the long-term there might arise individuals in the group or community who may want to be agents of transformation in their communities and become the catalyst to confront the sex work and trafficking crisis in ways that outsiders never could.

Before that point of identifying catalytic individuals for change one must first build that bridge for the marketplace and the church. Both arenas offer great value to confronting this crisis. The church is essential in providing the spiritual direction and ethical foundation for any outreach or development plan. As stated, the church has a unique opportunity to take the lead role. Further elaboration will be given on the importance of the marketplace, but the church must

not take a backseat. At the very least the church must be at the table of discussion with the other voices who are wanting to either tear down this multi-billion dollar black-market system, those who may want to manage it, some who want to ignore it and others who want to legalize some of the activities. Without the voice of the church the unethical practices and views will take hold and one will be left with a burgeoning crisis. That crisis has the potential to deteriorate the blindsides of communities that will at some point come into fuller view; a pattern that has taken hold in places around the world where red light districts have been either directly or indirectly legalized and/or accepted.

### **Recapturing the *Imago Dei***

There are arguments that explain and attempt to indirectly justify the need to legalize prostitution<sup>1</sup>. However, is the church to accept the state of those communities? Is the church just going to be quiet as those at the center of the table discussion dismiss the *Imago Dei*? The perspectives to defend or legalize sex work challenges the *Imago Dei*; because to accept that reality is to ultimately justify it. When speaking about the Image of God it is important that the magnitude of the phrase is not lost. To understand the magnitude of the statement, “the Image of God,” one must first look to what the image reflects. In this case the image reflects God himself. Consider these scriptures: “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours – Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head overall.”<sup>2</sup> Or Jeremiah 10:6, “There is none like You, Lord;

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<sup>1</sup> Annamarie Forestiere, “To Protect Women, Legalize Prostitution,” Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review, October 1, 2019, <https://harvardcrl.org/to-protect-women-legalize-prostitution>. (Web accessed November 23, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:11

You are great, and great is Your name in might.” One can also look to Psalm 104:24, “O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.” The scriptures are full of more descriptions about God. Those verses touch on his greatness as well as his works. It could be that those who propose avenues that attempt to support individuals who are exploited while not actually dealing with the central issue, for example, helping them to exit the exploitative business have a low view of God and thus the Imago Dei. Anyone dealing with a difficult issue should stop and recognize the overwhelming reality of God. And from that point of reference one can move forward because there is a clearer recognition of who is ultimately in control. When the point of reference is rightly understood then one can begin to operate or live a life that applies who one is as an Image bearer through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 5:48 states, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect,” or Philippians 2:13, “For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purposes.” One first must first acknowledge that they are in God’s Image and apply their life to what the source, God, desires. This is a truth that the church must stand firm on in the marketplace and academia. Part of the why of the moral/ethical debate centers on the biblical parameters that are given in scripture regarding various issues. Secondly, as Image bearers of the God who gave the standard, it is the responsibility of believers to glorify God in taking a firm and loving stand whenever an idea or policy emerges that challenges the Imago Dei: “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Of course, those who took part in the training were not believers but part of the process of igniting hope is to ignite the thought that they are made in the Image of God and no matter their situation they can move forward. The term *Imago Dei* is not directly used during the training but introducing those skills to help them to discover that is a definite goal.

It is not enough to sit on one's hands and just allow injustice rather than justice to flow like a river. The church, the body of Christ, has within it all the gifts and people needed to have the impact on this crisis necessary for long-term transformation. As an Image bearer one carries the Image, but they also lovingly confront the areas that contradict the *Imago Dei*. Contradictions like sexual exploitation will not be fully done away with until the return of Christ, but one must not allow this crisis to gain a wider beachhead. That is why any plan must not minimize the potentialities of the church in conjunction with the eternally overwhelming influence of the Holy Spirit. No matter the plan, the Holy Spirit is what empowers and leads one to not only deal with the issue at hand but to also confront the various other phenomenon that buffet the crisis.

### **Moving Forward**

While one recognizes the significance and indispensability of the church one should not be foolish to think that marketplace principles cannot play a critical role moving forward. The marketplace touches all aspects of life in some capacity. That same marketplace is both good and can be detrimental. The marketplace and capitalism have done more than any other economic system in history for the general populace; even though other doors for economic abuse have been opened through the intricate threads of "casino capitalism."<sup>4</sup> However, tools and skills that

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<sup>4</sup> Poole, Eve. *Capitalism's Toxic Assumptions: Redefining Next Generation Economics*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015

can lead to success within the marketplace are what will be highlighted with the objective of better serving the target group.

There have been many programs that have been laid out to engage and empower similar groups: micro-financing, sowing programs, and various job trainings that were identified in chapter 1. All are worthy and what the aim here is not too far from their intent. This approach seeks to equip and help them to launch into platforms that they can and want to pursue by first building hope. During a discussion involving the topic of the future of work at Harvard Business school, professor Manjari Raman described soft skills as being “essential skills.”<sup>5</sup> The skills that will be expanded upon later can potentially be transferred to any professional and/or vocational arena. Furthermore, those skills can be something that if applied well may help them to flourish within new opportunities. There is no intent here to immediately limit or place restrictions on what they can do because of the support and training that is being provided. On the other hand, the goal is to give them something, in light of the truths of scripture that can be utilized in any segment of the marketplace. Exposing them to those soft skills is the foundation of hope that the training aims to ignite. There needs to be some starting point. By providing that, one can better walk alongside them as they pursue other ‘hard’ skills that they want to develop leading into other opportunities.

As an extension of the above stated goal there is also the desire to modify and contextualize the program so that it can be adopted in other contexts. The bridge that is being built will involve the participation of people. Understanding the scriptures in relation to the marketplace in the context of the training that has been developed here is essential (see Appendix

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<sup>5</sup> Manjari Raman, 2018.

1). However, one will be speaking into the wind if there is no consideration that the desire is to speak into the lives of real people with real dreams.

### ***The Training Process***

The steps involved in the training were meant to be simple, non-intimidating, and most importantly practical. What must be considered, as well, is that the group being engaged had a small window of time that they were willing to give up from their work. In addition, gathering such a large group in from that profession was not easy for the partnering NGOs. Having them there was encouraging but on another note, they were looking to get back to their sex work activities. With that in mind those involved with teaching these simple materials aimed to pass something of value that would ignite hope that would inspire new pursuits. Below is what transpired step by step during the training in January 2020:

- 1) The women entered and they and the trainers introduced themselves. The sitting arrangement was in a circular format to encourage a more open environment.
- 2) The first question that was asked was, “what are your hopes and dreams for the future?” This was followed by various responses relating to tailoring, employment in a salon, better futures for their children, etc.
- 3) They were then each given an 8.5 by 11 card stock document with a symbol representing each of the soft skills that were going to be covered.
- 4) At that point the training commenced covering the following: (see Appendix 2 for more details)
  - a. ID the Skill
  - b. Introduce the relating Biblical story

- c. Share approximately 2 teaching points
- d. Share 'How to Application.' During this step they were asked to split up into smaller groups of 3 to 4 to re-explain it to each other and then a volunteer was asked to share the concept/skill with the wider group.
- e. After about an hour and a half there was a break for chi/tea and biscuits. Then the training continued until all 10 skills were covered.

Before exiting the teaching area, the trainers and NGO reps made sure to get everyone's contact information. They then asked them about a step that they could soon see themselves taking to move forward. The majority first stated that they enjoyed the training. Second, some of the breakout groups shared that they had some ideas about how they would like to get together to work on salon and tailoring projects. Those groups and other individuals in the training stated that they needed some help to move forward with that first step; specifically with capital. Fortunately, one of the NGOs there specialized in micro-financing, and they shared with them how they could help in that regard. After that the women exited except for one woman who was middle aged whose left eye was shut closed due to some incident that had occurred. She smiled and said thanks for what had been shared. Following a time of debrief with the NGO leadership it was stated that follow-up surveys would be administered at a later date.

### **Soft/Essential Skills**

This portion of the research project will focus on the ten soft skills that were shared with the group of sex workers who participated in this training. Each skill covers a particular area that can contribute to success in whatever field they decide to engage in. There must continue to be sensitivity to the reality that they are individuals with distinct desires, dreams, and goals; and the

purpose of the training experience is to assist them in pursuing those goals and dreams. Each skill is matched with a particular Biblical story/scripture that will further highlight its significance. There is an emphasis on ‘stories’ because in most cultures around the world and increasingly in the West stories move people to action and bring to life deeper truths and realities. Each skill also has 2-3 descriptive points to expand on the text in relation to the soft skill. The final portion, which is the most important, is a “how to statement” (see Appendix 2). The “how to” statement is meant to be a very practical approach about how one can apply that concept to their situation. Some contextualization will be involved but the concept is meant to be universal and can be applied broadly. Each participant will also be given a card-stock page with 10 symbols that represent each essential/soft skill (see Appendix 3).

### 1. Work Ethic

“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:26-28)

The why of work begins with this passage where God commissioned and directed Adam and Eve to be fruitful, to subdue, and to rule over. First, to be fruitful highlights the blessing of human life and community. One’s work is impacted, impacts, is influenced and influences community in some capacity. Community or social groups involve families, organizations, and corporations that one may be involved with. It cannot be understated the reality of community in relation to work. Yes, there is an individual fulfillment in the context of work. Work should bring a sense of individual joy and fulfillment. However, that joy can be experienced with greater depth when

one sees the benefit that their work has on those around them and, most importantly, as one sees the movement towards God's call for all of humanity to utilize their physical, psychological, and spiritual energy for the betterment of those around their community. Completely selfish aims will eventually bring detriment to those in the community. This can be the family who struggles to survive because of the father's wasteful spending or the market that is untangled due to sub-prime loans like what happened in 2008-09. To be fruitful is a direct calling to physical multiplication and communal flourishing.

Second, one must subdue. The workplace can be an antagonistic environment. How one approaches those situations can determine a lot about one's workplace and even personal health. It is important to understand that the word subdue is a verb. One is to be actively involved in the work of bringing peace and God's blessing to every environment where one goes. Psalm 84:6 points to the effect that believers have or are supposed to have on a challenging environment, "As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of spring..." Subdue, though its connotation may imply intense conflict, should be viewed as an objective of the believer in the workplace. One is to bring refreshing springs to the environments that they enter. The home should be a refreshing spring for all those present. The office, the loading dock, and everything else in between should be impacted or subdued by believers. How many believers, people who claim to apply high ethical and moral standards to their workplace, or boards have turned their eyes from decisions, behaviors, or professional cultures that need to be subdued to God's standard? How many churches have chosen to partner with false theology and a culture that needs to be subdued rather than simply accepted as the norm? Too many. The earth is filled with places and situations that must be subdued. That does not mean that one attacks without love and

turns themselves into an annoying siren. One the other hand, the individual and community that knows their God is the most content and most potent in moving towards transformation.

The believer is also meant to rule. It is not enough to multiply and subdue if one does not rule. The world is desperate to see a life and be touched by actions that are ruled by God. Every void will be filled by something or someone. If the believer does not step up and speak out when there is unethical behavior at any level, then what will rule the situation may be some idea or person who is even more detrimental. When the church does not fulfill its role to impact and influence then there can be no complaining if cultural, economic, or spiritual desolation follows. But to rule demands that one is willing to take those arrows from the enemy: the criticisms, the stress, even the possibility of failure in order to move forward to multiply, subdue and rule as salt and light. That does not necessarily mean that one is in a position of leadership. To rule can also mean that one is that consistent presence that gradually brings faith, hope, and love every day.

Adam and Eve were given a clear directive in Genesis 1. However, their ability to accomplish that directive, not the directive itself, was diluted by the fall: “Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.” (Genesis 3:17-18). The why of their work had been completely disrupted. A clear call had turned into something that had been clouded; and confusion leads to misdirection. Thus, work that is unethical and detrimental to the individual and the community (ie. Sex work) enters the conversation as a viable option to live and survive. The thriving life that Adam and Eve and those who were to follow were meant to experience and take part in would not be the same. Even for the believer who is restored to a relationship with God has to deal with a diluted reality. All that is wrong with the world and work points to that event and the central agent of the event: the serpent, Satan. He wanted to

supplant multiplication and community with his strife and devastation; one's ability to subdue was replaced with pacification, and one's calling to rule replaced with slavery. That is what he does best: steal, kill and destroy. That is his work. His kingdom work can be seen for anyone who wants to open their eyes from the breakage of the family, to the disintegration of communities, to the moral confusion with governments and society.

However, the devil's work and his patterns of individual and generational disruption was, ultimately, confronted by the Savior's work, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."<sup>6</sup> The kingdom that is now but not yet changes the dynamic of one's work and environment. The kingdom that is now is expressed in the fruits of the spirit, which are led by the conductors faith, hope, and love. This empowers one to overcome the burden of the diluted workplace and the lie that the diluted workplace should be an accepted norm. With that proper work ethic, to walk in and pursue righteousness, then one can experience the statement from Ecclesiastes 5:18: "Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot." That is not a depressing statement when seen through redeemed eyes. On the contrary, that frees one from the obsession to pursue the shadows of vanity and push back the burden of depression and inferiority. Work, if done to glorify God and encourage human flourishing, disrupts the marketplace of the enemy and he loses currency in one's life and in one's community.

The first skill that was chosen, 'work ethic' is impacted by the desire and effort that one puts towards work. Enthusiasm and hard work can lift any environment; from the homemaker,

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<sup>6</sup> 1 John 3:8

street sweeper, and the corner office. Grasping the importance of work ethic can go a long way in building towards broader success.

It is important that in an integrated biblical and marketplace approach one acknowledges the source and reason for work. Common grace is available for individuals and nations. Furthermore, the aspiration is to magnify the reality of work as being God designed and directed. Those that are being engaged in this context have participated in work that is counter to God's call for their lives and this training aims to reframe that worldview while also equipping them. It is inevitable to encounter those who do not recognize God much less that they are in God's image. The women who are being targeted through this program come from belief systems that are not Christian. The stories may be foreign to their worldview but the 10 concepts/skills not so much. There is a careful balance that one must strike without being compromising but the goal is to reach them with biblical truth as well as exposing them to a new way of seeing and applying these skills. The other nine lessons will vary in their subtly, but this strikes the tone that the training is aiming for. The entire concept of building the bridge aims to highlight important skills while not ignoring the benefit of Biblical principles. If either side is ignored than this will just turn into another program to engage the trafficking community and not what it is intended to be, which is a tool to bring hope and cause measurable disruption within that community.

## 2. Communication

<sup>18</sup> Then Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. <sup>19</sup> The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. <sup>20</sup> I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. <sup>21</sup> Then I will send a boy and say, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to him, ‘Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,’ then come, because, as surely as the Lord lives, you are safe; there is no danger. <sup>22</sup> But if I say to the boy, ‘Look, the

arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the Lord has sent you away.<sup>23</sup> And about the matter you and I discussed—remember, the Lord is witness between you and me forever."<sup>24</sup> So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat.<sup>25</sup> He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty.<sup>26</sup> Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean—surely he is unclean."<sup>27</sup> But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"<sup>28</sup> Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem.<sup>29</sup> He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table." (1 Samuel 20:18-39)

The communication between David and Jonathan may have seemed elaborate but it was necessary to ensure that David was safe and that the message was clearly communicated. This communication was motivated by love, a unified purpose and a clear kingdom mindset that understood vertical positioning displayed by Jonathan's humility to support someone who was destined to take the throne over him. Communication in any setting, especially that of the workplace, that exhibits those qualities has the potential to transform the relationships and how work gets done in that setting.

There was clearly a respectful and loving relationship between the two of these men that was formed over time during conflict with enemy nations and other events. A bond was formed that displayed the characteristics of love from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Throughout their time together, as portrayed in the scriptures, David and Jonathan displayed these qualities to one another. David was patient in waiting for God's timing nor did he boast before Saul or Jonathan regarding his anointing to be king. In addition, he continued to be humble rather than arrogant and rude; a negative and reactive attitudes that many may want to adopt when communicating to someone

who is verbally abusing or threatening them in the workplace. David did not resent Saul, nor did he project any resentment towards Saul's son Jonathan. David also continued to bear and endure Saul's rejection throughout this episode and during subsequent events, while maintaining his hope in the Lord. In turn, Jonathan, though the perceived and desired heir by his father and likely many within his family, was not rude much less resentful towards David. He did not 'insist on his own way' but continued to do what he could to support and protect David. He bore the criticisms from his father Saul while hoping for a resolution to the conflict. An environment of work that has people walking in the above qualities of love can have a significant impact. Communication that is based on love and not gossip, envy, or the support of unethical behavior will build up rather than breakdown an organization. As was discussed in the work ethic section, 'the enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy.' This a lot of times begins with communication. Communication from a single person or amongst small or large groups will have some level of influence whether one intends for it or not. The impact of communication or the tongue is described in the following verses:

"How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing..."<sup>7</sup>

The situation that David and Jonathan were in was not ideal. Imagine how worst it would have been if either or both had unhealthy communication between each other or even towards Saul. So regardless of the environment healthy communication will have an impact.

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<sup>7</sup> James 3:5b-10a

They also had a unified purpose to see David survive and, ultimately, rise to the position of kingship. Yes, there was love, but in one's work there must be some end goal or purpose that one is moving towards. One can be nice to their boss and co-workers all day but if they are not working effectively towards a central and unified purpose then they just turn into a smiling face with no other value to the organization. That unified purpose was clear for David and Jonathan. That clarity informed their communication. Instead of David going to eat with Saul and further risking his life they each came up with a plan to safeguard their united purpose. Specific measures were undertaken so that Jonathan could ascertain further the intent of his father, communication could be passed along, and David's safety could be assured. That unified purpose to maintain David's safety to move him forward towards kingship motivated their communication. They were certain about what they wanted to accomplish so the measures that they took were not unreasonable. If someone or an organization is truly confident, excited, and united in their purpose, communication will be something that will take place consistently and clearly. Like David and Jonathan, one will have to have a clear purpose. Second, consider the different variables affecting the situation. Third, set out a plan to communicate in order to work through those variables. Fourth, execute in order to move towards that purpose.

Next, regarding this episode of communication, is Jonathan's kingdom mindset displayed by his humility which was informed by love, his unified purpose, and his understanding of vertical positioning. When one thinks of communication in any organized structure then there will always be leaders at some level who will require healthy communication, whether those leaders display the same type of healthy communication or not. It is the responsibility of those who do understand the benefit of healthy communication to sometimes endure in order to then transform. Jonathan was in a precarious situation as he was dealing with two separate dynamics.

On one hand he was attempting to be respectful towards and honor his Father who had become that envious, unethical manager who needs to be removed, and on the other hand David who was the newly anointed king. One can imagine the stress he must have felt. However, he understood that God is supreme, and He had established David as the new king. That is why his communication favored David. That kingdom mindset, even though he might have been distressed by his situation, was all the clarity that he needed to support David. Jonathan did not directly try to remove or undermine Saul; he was simply supporting the directives of the Heavenly king. In a present professional setting this may look like one supporting the ethical principles within an organization while showing respect to the current leaders. One should adhere to those higher standards in their workplace while also not becoming someone who undermines current leadership. Like Saul, those who pursue and become obsessed with unethical behavior will eventually be dealt with. However, one's communication should always be seasoned with salt<sup>8</sup>.

Communication follows as the second portion of the training. Communication is key to any role in society. There are a lot of examples about communication that one could pull out of the scriptures and this one gives a clear cause and effect of how healthy communication impacted a significant historical event. Here the lead off is with the episode where Jonathan warned David to flee, (1 Samuel 20:18-39). At this point in the story Saul was filled with almost murderous anger towards David. Jonathan and David's elaborate plan to communicate to one another about whether it was safe for David to return likely saved David's life, which would ultimately impact the future of the nation. One act of disciplined communication would affect the history of multiple generations. As stated there will be a story to highlight each of the soft skills.

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<sup>8</sup> Colossians 4:6

The training will also continue to communicate events and people in a historical light. The scriptures are inspired and inerrant but the purpose here is to press into the hearers, who will all likely have contrary perspectives, to see these events and people as historical. This will continue to build on the integrated approach to build hope to serve this community by highlighting the need to communicate across different situations despite various challenges against healthy communication.

### 3. Teamwork

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.<sup>9</sup> Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.”<sup>10</sup> So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill.<sup>11</sup> As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning.<sup>12</sup> When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset.<sup>13</sup> So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.<sup>14</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.” (Exodus 17:8-14)

Community and the concept of teamwork is essential; especially with the group that has been initially targeted with this training. Teamwork as a soft skill is essential as many of these individuals may very well pool financial and/or time resources together in order to maximize their personal capital. In addition, emphasizing honest teamwork and how that can lead to greater success is crucial. This is highlighted through this story when Aaron and Hur held up Moses’ arms during a crucial battle in Exodus 17:8-14. It can be observed that from that story Moses was commanded to remain in a position of worship as the Israelites fought the battle. But something as simple as keeping his hands raised was a difficult task; and one that he would not have

accomplished on his own. Even though it was seemingly a simple task, he needed help. When his arms fell the battle went against the Israelites. However, with those around him helping, the results led to a great victory for a people that were moving towards their new home. Some of the most significant tasks one is called to cannot be accomplished alone as Moses experienced in this situation.

There were multiple people involved but there was a singular vision and plan which led to focused action. That vision was given by God for the people to enter and conquer the promised land. Throughout the journey from Egypt there were various instances of disobedience and doubt. But it was that singular vision that had motivated their actions throughout that journey. That vision entailed work. They would not be able to stroll to the promised land without their commitment to that vision being tested and their faith refined. The violence of battle would serve as the soil for that process in many instances; and the Amalekites would throw themselves at the traveling Israelites. This victory along with many others were completely dependent on God's provision and strength. It cannot be stated enough the significance of the actions taken by those three men. Moses could have dismissed as silly the need to have to hold up his arms towards Heaven as the others fought. Aaron and Hur could have said that, that strategy was not sufficient; rather they could have argued that their efforts could have been better served fighting with or directing the soldiers. However, when there is singular vision based on a moral and ethical foundation then unity follows, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion."<sup>9</sup> Whenever an individual like Miriam<sup>10</sup> or group like Korah's rebellion<sup>11</sup> moved

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 133:1

away from that singular vision and unity there were consequences. When an organization or church has either unethical roots or shifts from a singular vision then there will undoubtedly at some point be a time when they will have to endure the consequences of fragmentation. It was a literal life or death situation for the Israelites at that time. It may not be as extreme for others in different situations, but one will have to consider the effect that disunity can have.

Teamwork also necessitates both an effort to reach the end goal as well as humility to ask for help. One does not give into desperation when driven to ask for help. Moses was not desperate, but he understandably needed help to follow through with his task. In addition, one cannot be selfish in regard to teamwork. Aaron and Hur were given the job to hold up another man's hands. At the time Moses was old but some may think that, that was an odd job to have to hold up his hands. However, they had the humility to do the job that was necessary to accomplish the task at hand, which was winning that battle. This is reflected on so many levels in one's daily work and responsibilities at home or other professional and/or vocational settings. Can one step up or step 'down' from where they are to do the necessary task for the flourishing of their environment? It is hard to say sometimes until one is put in that position. Aaron and Hur could have had one of their servants or another person come to hold up Moses' hands. Aaron, and what one can inhere from the text, Hur also must have been in Moses' inner circle. They could have stood by while someone else did the seemingly 'small job' of holding up Moses' hands. There were tens of thousands of able-bodied people who they could have selected from. In addition, they could have made a strong argument that their time could have been spent doing other tasks that were directly beneficial for the Israelite community. From the text no such

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<sup>10</sup> Numbers 12

<sup>11</sup> Numbers 16:1-40

excuses were made by either person. They humbly and faithfully did their duty and held up his hands. Teamwork must have the component of humility. There will be an instance where someone will have to do the menial task for the team to move forward which in turn will allow everyone to flourish. In settings where teamwork is not emphasized there is the need and reality for interconnected parts and people who have the heart to be humble enough to accomplish the team's primary objective.

Where there is a team there is a diversity of people. Moses was the primary leader at the time, Aaron was the foremost priest and Hur of the tribe of Judah also would have served an important role. Those men were diverse in their personalities and responsibilities. However, that did not disrupt the need to work as a team to accomplish a goal. Diversity exists everywhere. When diverse strands come together there is flourishing. When they move apart many different streams emerge leading to different goals and objectives. If their diversity would have gotten in the way of their singular vision and ultimate objective, it would have led to disaster for the Israelite people. Teamwork is better and "looks" better with diversity. The church, for example, is better because of the diversity of gifts and people. Not only that, but the church looks better when there are diverse people and/or diverse giftings working together to accomplish the commission to make disciples of all nations. When this same concept is captured by organizations or governments then there is a wider benefit for all involved. Teams then turn into families that are not just working towards accomplishing one objective after another but into a unit that seeks the well-being of their partners; though different they run one race as a team out of joy rather than obligation.

In a real team all the credit does not belong to a single person nor does all the blame belong to some other person or persons. Teamwork leads to accountability and progress. When

embraced in a healthy way, participating in, and encouraging others towards healthy teamwork can be transformative for any workplace. For Moses, Aaron, Hur and the Israelites it was a matter of life or death. For others it may not be a literal situation of life and death but metaphorically it is life or death. Will the team flourish, leading to life, or will there be a slow grind towards disconnected vision, followed by selfishness and arrogance rather than humility, and a rejection of diversity and healthy teams, leading to death? In many ways one is faced with those metaphorical life or death situations and decisions which is decided in the environment of groups, families, organizations, and teams; whose various impacts are not isolated to an individual.

#### 4. Adaptability

“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce.<sup>6</sup> Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.<sup>7</sup> Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jeremiah 29:5-7)

Adaptability can be one area that can be difficult for anyone to want to do. Often it means one operating outside of their comfort zone. But for those who have been forced to adapt in various ways in diverse situations they may find it not as difficult to become accustomed to those transitions. The challenge, however, is to apply that adaptability to productive activities.

Adaptability in adverse situations is something anyone in any situation must undertake in some capacity in life. As a soft skill it can lead to greater achievements. Being adaptable feeds into other soft skills. What is the point of being an expert in other areas when one is unable to contextualize those skills for and during other situations? The events that led up to the Hebrew exile in Babylon was juxtaposed by a call to adapt and prosper. The Israelites disobedience

followed by the Babylonian invasion and forced exile was the event that put those Israelites into a situation that forced them to adapt and flourish despite the location where they had been forced to move. Adapting does not necessarily begin at the point where and when one needs to adapt. Sometimes one must first come to grips with the event that forced one to adapt. The Israelites had to adapt but there was a lesson that they needed to learn also; trust and obey God rather than seek and worship idols and reject the standard that God has called them to. If one continues to adapt without reflecting on the events that forced them to have to adapt, then one can get caught in an unending pattern of repeating mistakes.

However, adapting does not necessarily imply that there were preceding mistakes. One should also be aware of their environment and the variables that may have forced one to change their approach and strategies. This may mean taking time to process those different variables. The events depicted in Jeremiah had a cause-and-effect relationship that the Israelites were directly responsible for. But those who are not responsible for preceding adverse events must, like those who may have been directly responsible, should simply look honestly at what happened, take an honest look at themselves, and move forward. Adapting always provides one with an opportunity to learn and grow. Adapting usually demands that one tweak and/or add skills to their personal toolbox as they move forward. This occurs on an individual level or an organizational level depending on the situation.

Whether forced in some way to adapt or if a person or organization decides to pursue some new objective or opportunity then they may be forced to adapt their former processes in order to grow. Especially in the fast-paced world of change that people and organizations inhabit, being able to adapt quickly is a necessity. In Machine Platform Crowd McAfee and Brynjolfsson argue that short-term iterations are replacing long-range forecast, plans, and big bets amongst

most companies.<sup>12</sup> Being able to adapt is likely one of the most important soft/essential skills one must be able to do in their work. From the house parent who is dealing with the realities of covid, to the company that is having to wrestle with fluctuating economies, to the sex worker who is trying to identify their place in a new professional setting. Adapting is not easy but a necessary fact.

The Hebrew people were entering a stressful and traumatic era in their history. Many families would suddenly find themselves planted in an entirely new cultural and national context. However, God was calling them to apply principles that would lead to prosperity in their new home. They could have chosen to allow their impending situation to define who they were, but they were directed to adapt, press on, be productive and to prosper (v.7). On the other side of healthy patterns of adapting there is the potentiality that the individual or organization will flourish. In Jeremiah 29:7 the nation was given a directive to flourish and prosper. Adapting may not lead to abundant prosperity but the believer is not called to simply accept the status quo and allow themselves or their environment to deteriorate. One can change and adapt, or they can allow those events and environment, whatever it may be, to determine the direction of their lives. That can be easier said than done, but, when awoken to and driven by faith, hope and love, sourced in the Savior King, then there is a greater possibility to adapt, grow and prosper.

Paul, though in prison, wrote these words, “Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and

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<sup>12</sup> McAfee, Andrew and Erik Brynjolfsson. *Machine, Platform, Crowd: Harnessing Our Digital Future*. Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Audio, 2017

hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”<sup>13</sup> Paul is in many ways the model for adapting. He entered and engaged various communities with unique cultures, languages, and beliefs; with a message that those people had not encountered before. He also wrote to different churches that had their own unique cultural dynamics. He endured criticisms, persecutions, but experienced a flourishing ministry. His work was full of challenges and experiences, good and bad. However, while reflecting upon and pressing through his current situation in prison, he was inspired to write those above words. He had learned to be content and to adapt to different circumstances because of his faith in Christ. Regardless of the situation, strength based on faith in Christ can give a healthy perspective on and ability to adapt to different situations. Paul was one of the most learned and knowledgeable men of his time. With all his training and experiences, he admitted that it was not anything that he possessed that he could boast<sup>14</sup> about. On the other hand, all that was torn down as he came to learn that it was Christ who gave him the strength to do all that he had done. From the Damascus Road to the prison cell where he sat, his experiences were within the context of a life transformed and defined by Christ. All the tools and resources that one can utilize to adapt to a situation can be taken away. Eventually, the bailout money for banks and corporations will come to a halt along with the resources that the government pours out. But what can never be taken away from those in different social-economic situations is an assurance that Christ is present and available for those who desire to seek<sup>15</sup> Him.

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<sup>13</sup> Philippians 4:11-13

<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 6:33

Adaptability leads many to just survive; to be fair, that may be the only option at times. But how can steps be taken to thrive? The mindset of the Hebrews could have been to just get by and survive for however long they were going to be in that circumstance but that is not what they nor anyone should accept. As with Paul, they had a deeper motivation and call that was instigating them forward. And without that deeper call it may seem unreasonable to do what is being advocated here. However, at every turn there is the opportunity to challenge and overcome the status quo while adapting to prosper.

## 5. Problem-solving

“Also our enemies said, ‘Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work...’ Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. (Nehemiah 4:11,13)

From adaptability the next step is problem-solving. There is no one who does not encounter a situation where they do not have to problem solve. Nehemiah was a leader who faced multiple obstacles that required wise problem-solving decisions. One such incident in Nehemiah 4:11,13 was the need to mount a defense while continuing the reconstruction of the wall. It was an extreme circumstance that necessitated an immediate solution. Nehemiah would have to confront multiple challenges during the task he was leading. This particular situation was threatening the lives of the workers. However, through simply thinking through a solution, problem-solving, he along with the others were able to continue the work. In any enterprise one must be able to look at an issue and develop a plan of action to bring about a resolution. In Nehemiah’s situation there are multiple soft skills being practiced by himself and those he was overseeing. Problems if allowed to fester will ultimately swell into bigger complications such as the situation Nehemiah faced. If he had ignored this problem workers and families might have

been killed setting back or even stopping the work completely. The lives and future of those inhabiting the city of Jerusalem at that time were at stake. Though the circumstances may be a little different, for those in adverse situations and environments, it is even more crucial that problems are resolved unless one's family, community and future are affected.

In dealing with this problem Nehemiah had to first acquire knowledge of the issue. When one attempts to confront a problem without knowing what the problem is then a plan will not be able to be formulated. There were surrounding populations who did not want to see Nehemiah and the inhabitants be successful in their efforts to rebuild the walls of the city, "But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it."<sup>16</sup> Not only the reality of opposition, but just the potential of there being opposition towards their work and central objective would have been well known to Nehemiah. Every strategy that encounters problems and obstacles must take a moment to identify what the problem is. Nehemiah identified the source of the problem and the methods of disruption. If he had not identified those factors, then he could have misplaced resources and people to effectively counter the problems that were emerging. There are so many times when an individual or organization fails to identify the problems that are holding them back. Even worse, they may purposely ignore those problems in hopes that they either go away or do not turn into such a significant challenge to warrant greater attention. How many ministries, companies or families broke apart because problems were not identified clearly and addressed robustly. It is also interesting that the different groups were not lumped together in a single description. They

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<sup>16</sup> Nehemiah 4:7-8

were each identified individually. Five separate groups were identified in the fourth chapter of Nehemiah as wanting to cause harm to the Israelites and ultimately disrupt and end their work on the wall. By identifying a problem or one's personal shortcomings one can move more freely towards certain goals. When there are problems that one has not identified which are causing friction while trying to move forward then it can be difficult to flourish. Leading to constant anxiety of what is causing a project, a strategic plan or one's personal and/or professional life from moving forward.

Verse 7 of Nehemiah 4 identifies the source of the problem. Verses 8 and 11 identify the objectives and goal of the problem. According to the scripture the builders and their families did not have to deal directly with any violence from the five groups that were identified but they were aware of it. If one is able to identify problems, then that is good. It is also beneficial to be aware of the potential or present fruits of those problems. Knowing the effects of those issues before they come or even after will allow one to continue maneuvering into a healthy position to resolve those problems. In this case Nehemiah knew that they wanted to bring violence to cause building disruption. So, he positioned people (v.13) in key locations to repel any of those actions. But his actions were dependent upon the knowledge of the problem and the actions that would take place if they were not prepared. Anticipation and preparation can usually be one's most potent tool in solving problems. However, it means that one must be proactive and sensitive to their work environment. Name the profession and there is a list of problems that one can anticipate or at least be aware of that should motivate one to be prepared for different scenarios.

Nehemiah identified the problem, he identified the effects of the problem, and he moved to address the problem. Nehemiah 4:13 describes what he specifically did to deal with it; by reorganizing some of the people from different families and clans to hold weapons and take up

defensive positions to protect the builders and safeguard the goal of rebuilding the wall. His actions were decisive because he understood the problem and his goal to continue rebuilding the wall. It took effort to move to address the problem. Sometimes one knows the problem but does not have the resolve to take the necessary action to deal with it. Thus, it festers until the resulting outcome emerges. Nehemiah's leadership prevented a chain of events that would have dramatically impacted the process of restoring the walls of Jerusalem.

This led to a clear resolution in Nehemiah 4:15: "When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work." If the problems one identifies have not been resolved, then maybe there is the need to reevaluate. Maybe one did not identify it correctly or maybe the impact of the problem was misjudged. Either way, until there is a resolution or a timetable for a resolution then it is not enough to just dismiss the issue. Furthermore, in Nehemiah 4:16-17, though the problem was resolved, he was on guard against its reemergence: "From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah who were building on the wall." It is easy, after we have dealt with a problem, to just assume that it or a variant of that problem cannot return. One should not be obsessed, but there is wisdom in mounting a mental or whatever other kind of guard so one does not cycle back around to that problem. In Nehemiah's case it was setting up a continuous physical guard. In another organizational case it may mean setting up layers to prevent ethical collapse. Individually, it may mean setting up personal boundaries in order to not get caught in immoral behavior. In either instance, setting up those safeguards can be a wise course of action after identifying and working to resolve a problem. Regardless of what setting or timeframe one encounters, the emergence of situations needing wise problem-solving skills is an expected

reality as one works. Since the curse problems will be an ongoing reality but they need not prevent one from moving forward.

## 6. Creativity

<sup>26</sup> And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair. <sup>27</sup> The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. <sup>28</sup> They also brought spices and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. <sup>29</sup> All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the Lord freewill offerings for all the work the Lord through Moses had commanded them to do.<sup>30</sup> Then Moses said to the Israelites, “See, the Lord has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, <sup>31</sup> and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—<sup>32</sup> to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze,<sup>33</sup> to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic crafts.<sup>34</sup> And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others.<sup>35</sup> He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers—all of them skilled workers and designers. (Exodus 35:26-35)

If there is a soft-skill that most reflects the *Imago Dei*, it is creativity. When creativity is encouraged for an individual in any circumstance one may be better able to connect to their desires, dreams, and goals. One of the underlining objectives of walking through these skills is to work to engage the whole person; and one's personal creativity and passions is critical in that work. The refusal to be creative can cause one to miss out on the unique gift or gifts that God has blessed them with. Stepping out of the box and allowing God to expand one's creative boundaries is empowering. The work on the tabernacle in Exodus 35:26-35 states how God blessed certain individuals with creative gifts to build its various structures and tools, “He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers....”<sup>17</sup> These unique skills allowed them to accomplish something that they would have been completely

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<sup>17</sup> Exodus 35:35

unequipped to do on their own. Throughout that passage there are also healthy principles that can be ascertained for a thriving workplace.

First, despite one's condition or situation in the workplace there is the potential to do something that can contribute to the goals of that environment. But the key is that one must be willing to start somewhere and use the gifts and skills they have. In chapter 35 and verses 26 and 29 it states that they were "willing" to either work or contribute offerings. Verse 26 focuses more so on their ability and desire to work whereas verse 29 focuses on their willingness to bring the necessary offerings. But in verse 26 there were women who were both skilled and willing to work on the goat hair. Those women were contributing time and effort towards a very significant task. That task was very specific in nature due to the keen instructions that were given by God for the tabernacle and the various items that were being developed. Whether great or small there is some skill that one can apply towards a profession or workplace to bless that environment. The question is, "are you willing?" Are you willing to step out of a pattern of depression and hopelessness? Are you willing to move beyond the status quo or the feelings of uselessness and move forward? That is a hard question to answer depending on one's situation. There are the trials that can emerge from one's family, culture, history, or self-inflicting wounds that may be difficult to overcome. The individuals in the passage were encouraged and strengthened by God. That is why they were ultimately able to design and construct those elaborate items that had no equal in any place around the world. That is why the training that has been developed here and utilized emphasizes the need for an integrated approach. Skills are important, yes, but also those who are being targeted must be engaged with the ministry of the gospel to experience lasting freedom and holistic flourishing throughout their life. And that goes for anyone in any condition. There is one thing to live and be successful when all one has are the skills they have acquired or

developed. But they will never experience the fullness of purpose and life until they know the God in who's Image they were created to know, love and worship.

In the same passage there were two individuals who were blessed with special levels of skill and creativity. Belzalel and Oholiab were blessed with skills to construct and to teach. This situation was very distinct. However, one can observe God blessing individuals throughout the historical narratives of the Bible with abilities to accomplish missions that were beyond themselves without God's hand upon them. Those skills and creative gifts were given for a particular purpose. Those people had their shortcomings but there is a pattern of God using them despite themselves and because of His grace infused in their lives and work. The two men here and the women from verse 26 were obviously not perfect but God used them and their skills. Belzalel and Oholiab were especially gifted by God to do something that no person could do without God's specific blessing for that task. It is interesting to consider that God has a similar creative purpose for each of His sons and daughters. This training is not aimed to feed the target population a purpose or a profession that they should pursue. On the other hand, the aim is to open them up to new possibilities through the realization of essential skills coupled with a Biblical perspective that can maybe guide them towards those creative gifts and passions that they want to move towards.

Belzalel and Oholiab did not ignore the gifts and purpose that had been placed on them. If they had, they would have not experienced the fullness of what God had for them. In one's life and work, if one does not at the very least attempt to reach for, nurture, and apply the unique creative gifts that God has given them, then there is the possibility of missing out on some of the unique opportunities that they could experience. But it all begins with knowing the source: God. Belzalel and Oholiab began at that point before the blessing of skill and creativity. Once that

component is first ascertained then one can begin to move forward in God's purpose and direction.

Paul emphasizes the good works that one is called to walk in within the context of knowing Christ in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Each person has been specially formed by God. And there are good works that God has already mapped out for one to do and enjoy. Yes, work has its seasons of friction, but it all takes on a different perspective when one has faith, hope, and love, born out of a relationship with Christ Jesus, that is continually applied to one's workplace environment. One may not have an audible voice from Heaven telling them exactly what to do each day but as one walks with and trusts God, daily, while being led by His inspired Word, then all of life and work takes on a different dynamic. That is the life that leads to flourishing rather than unethical or selfish standards that lead to conflict and degradation. However, it could become an awkward road if one obsesses about the right direction to take. But God has not called His people to confusion, rather, to trust Him with the entirety of their life. As one loves Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength then there is clarity as one continually brings that attitude to their work; to do it well and to willingly honor God in one's everyday efforts.

As the training engages individuals from these difficult backgrounds there must be the understanding that they are unique individuals with dreams and desires of their own. They are not merely a target for a program, but they are uniquely created image bearers of God who have just as much potential to grow and be creative as the person coming from a less adverse situation.

Creativity will be instrumental moving ahead. Yes, there are hard skills that one can sharpen. But as one goes into a new profession and seeks to branch out independently, then

having a creative mind that is open to utilize those special God-given gifts moves one beyond someone who just comes to a class to someone who is realizing who they are and who they could be in relation to Christ.

## 7. Interpersonal Skills

“His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. ‘We are your slaves,’ they said. But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” (Genesis 50:18-21)

Community is an underlining theme throughout the soft skills training. *Interpersonal skills* are in many ways intermingled with the other sets of skills. Interacting with people is essential. Even if someone has a home-based career, at some point one will have to engage people. If one just dismisses the importance of real relationship building then they can miss out on other opportunities for advancement, growth, and genuine community. The application of this essential skill is portrayed in the life of a leader and logistical expert, Joseph. After being sold by his brothers and then rising to a position of significant power and influence Joseph had the opportunity to recycle those same attitudes and actions. However, he did something that is very much the crux of any positive relationship: he displayed love and forgiveness. He was sold into slavery, lost multiple years with his family, was in multiple adverse situations and the moment after his father died, when he had an opportunity to punish his brothers, he forgave them. His brothers were right to be afraid. However, Joseph had a vertical view of the situation seeing and trusting God’s sovereign purpose.

It is difficult to have a life that is ordered horizontally which involves how one interacts with people, their work responsibilities, conflict etc. if there is not vertical alignment with God.

One can have healthy interpersonal interactions without a personal relationship with God (common grace) but it will always be limited. When that vertical relationship is non-existent or disrupted then one is more susceptible to human nature that gives into the works of the flesh.<sup>18</sup> It must be reiterated that one is capable of good works, good leadership, and good interactions apart from knowing and committing their lives to Christ. This training highlights good skills that should and can be utilized by anyone in any situation. However, the goal is not to just stop at that point. There may be a level of flourishing that one may experience but the exposer to skills with a Biblically based component is meant, at the very least, to plant seeds where one can flourish within the context of a relationship with God as they experience and walk in the fruits of the Spirit: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”<sup>19</sup> When one’s interpersonal interactions continually reflect those principles then one can better stand contrary to the disruptions and challenges that they encounter in the workplace. Joseph was challenged at several moments in his life to eat fruit from the flesh or from the spirit. When thrown into the pit, according to the scriptures, he did not curse his brothers. When tempted by Potiphar’s wife he could have indulged in sexual immorality; instead, he ran and maintained his integrity before God even though he was rejected by man. And when his brothers came asking for food, he gave it to them rather than punishing them for their previous actions. After the death of his father, when he could have also harmed his brothers, without the criticisms of the man he presumably loved and respected the most, Jacob, he reassured them that he did not desire to do harm. Interpersonal skills do not always mean that one may get the upper hand in a disagreement or team decision that may be unethical and lead to

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<sup>18</sup> Galatians 5:19-21

<sup>19</sup> Galatians 5:22-23a

detrimental consequences. However, interpersonal skills, based on the fruits of the spirit, do not demand that one wins every meaningless battle but that they continue to be the thread on their team, in the workplace, or in a relationship that can endure and trust God for the final results.<sup>20</sup>

As Joseph progressed through his life and career his relationship with God informed his interpersonal skills, which informed his leadership. The success that Joseph experienced cannot be credited to just his maneuvering and strategic plans. God's favor blessed his interactions at every juncture. As a servant under Potiphar, Potiphar's home was blessed<sup>21</sup>, the prison was blessed<sup>22</sup> and ultimately Egypt and his family was saved. All that occurred while Joseph also experienced and endured lies and mistreatment. That is a crucial point to understand. Just because one walks in the fruits of the spirit and has healthy and ethical interpersonal skills, there is no guarantee that everyone will look favorably upon them. There are almost definitely going to be seasons of life, like Joseph experienced, where it seems that the positive attitude and all the hard work does not count for anything. But it does and will. In whatever setting one has to interact with people with different personalities, perspectives, and objectives that are not always ethical. Interpersonal skills that take into account that reality can better function when they get slapped in the face with people and circumstances that are contrary to a flourishing environment.

In addition, one cannot forget about the golden rule as a lamp which spreads further light on interpersonal skills: "And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them."<sup>23</sup> In the training the challenge is presented for the participants to look at ways that they can apply that

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<sup>20</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 39:1-6

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 39:21-23

<sup>23</sup> Luke 6:31

rule or way of thinking to practical circumstances in their life and/or future jobs. The historical leader, Jesus (presenting him like that to make it less confrontational for non-Christians), presented multiple principles that can transform lives and relationships. The golden rule is one such area that, when taken seriously and diffused throughout life, can lead to significant changes. There will be definite patterns one may have to unlearn but once the effort is made to begin to master those principles for positive interpersonal interaction so much can be affected moving forward. Joseph, for example, lived out this principle throughout his life. He treated Potiphar as he as a husband would have wanted to be treated by a servant. In addition, he treated his brothers during the initial trip to Egypt and after the death of his father Jacob as he would have wanted to be treated. The golden rule overrides every potential negative reaction or decision that one may want to make towards another individual or organization. It may take a significant amount of humility and tongue biting, but the fact remains that those who adhere to the golden rule are committing to a standard of excellence that is not supported in all instances or interactions that take place in the workplace or in the community. There are laws, regulations, or company by-laws that may restrain certain behavior but in all honesty, it can only go so far. The standard of the golden rule when practiced robustly in one's interactions will transform an environment if one is willing to be consistent and patient.

Joseph's story highlights multiple areas of healthy professionalism. When dealing with people one will very likely be offended or hurt at some point in time. However, one can make the decision to apply love and forgiveness; attitudes that can significantly influence one's relationships but also the environment where they work. Joseph's decisions would impact multiple generations of his family moving forward. Instead of planting seeds of further bitterness to be reciprocated later or retaliating during the various pivots of his journey, he made the bold

move to be counter-cultural and acknowledge God's, ultimate, sovereign hand in the midst of every situation.

#### 8. Time management

<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Paul emphasizes in Ephesians 5:15-16 to not live foolishly but to make the most of every opportunity. One's current situation, goals and culture can all effect one's process of time management. Paul was very direct in his writing and ministry. He was an apostle tasked with bringing the gospel to communities and people groups whose beliefs had been hardened by years of idolatry, animism, and other false perspectives of spiritism. Because of who he was Paul knew that he needed to focus his time to evangelize and build up believers. Not everyone is an evangelist like Paul, but one is still meant to bless their communities and workplaces in some way. That is best done as one embraces, not ignore, who they are as Image bearers of God and co-heirs with Christ. When one understands that they are image bearers, first, then there can be more clarity on the specific gifts and skills that make them unique. It is clear that if Paul had not responded to his calling to follow Christ and become an Apostle, he would have spent the rest of his life literally blind and also spiritually blind. Thus, never realizing his full purpose and never having the impact on the world that he did. For many that is the most puzzling question of their life. The believer has direction in the scriptures and in the Holy Spirit and still sometimes misses the mark. The unbeliever does not have that same benefit. Yes, they may have significant accomplishments but there will always be a cap on what they could do. Take Steven Hawkins for example. He had a great mind with many keen scientific insights. On the other hand, he dismissed God or refused to acknowledge Him publicly. With all that he accomplished, imagine

if he had trusted Christ and the scales had fell from his eyes. One can just wonder about the contributions that he could have made to the scientific and broader academic community as well as the world. That is the tragedy of human genius that does not meet the Holy Spirit. What one would consider as profound, God sees differently: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”<sup>24</sup> So much time and energy is wasted because people pursue their own ideas, imaginations, and beliefs outside the context of God. That is a tragedy. The hope of this training is that general skills for the common good will be passed on. It is presented within a framework of scriptures so that the importance of including Godly wisdom is not ignored as they are exposed to new skills and come to a deeper understanding of who they are as image bearers.

Time management is also affected by one’s current situation. Paul tried to live his life in such a way to maximize every moment; because he understood what was at stake. The backdrop of those verses were written while Paul was in prison. That is not something that should be brushed over. In fact, it gives even more credence to what he was writing regarding utilizing time effectively. No matter one’s circumstance or environment one can use time wisely and move forward into what God has purposed. Paul was telling his audience at Ephesus and subsequently the church universal to make the most of every opportunity; more importantly he was demonstrating that in his life and work. One’s situation may include family circumstances, the type of job they are working or pursuing, physical and mental barriers, or some other issue.

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<sup>24</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18-20

Certain people manage their time differently due to those circumstances. Paul was limited in many ways because he was in prison. However, instead of sitting back, complaining, and not getting anything done he focused his time by writing letters and ministering to others he met. Everyone has limitations, within or without, that may affect what they want to accomplish. On the other hand, everyone also has the ability, like Paul, to step back and ask themselves how they can manage their time in such a way to continue moving forward. The discipline of wise time management allows one to ascertain what step or steps can be taken to make progress. One may fail in certain instances, but failure does not necessarily mean time had been wasted. Paul had his ups and downs, but he managed his time in order to move forward despite his circumstances.

It is important that there is emphasis on time management in this training context but there are some different cultural differences when discussing this concept. How time is viewed can be one of the most distinct differences between cultures. And that is something to be celebrated. One culture may be very strict in segmenting their time each day as if it was a scarce resource whereas another may see time as a commodity that will come around again and again. The one constant in either case is that time is still ticking. Moreover, there are responsibilities that must be handled. Within either context the importance of utilizing the commodity of time is important. How one does that may vary due to their culture, but the fact remains is that they should be managing their time to apply gifts and skills in order to make the most of that time.

Goals that one sets will also be a variable that will affect one's management of their time and priorities. The group of 25+ individuals who have been engaged with this training were initially asked to form macro goals for the skills that they would be exposed to. Those goals would be paramount in how they managed their time; with the objective of carving out time away from the sex work and putting it into healthier investments of time that would lead to productive lifestyles.

But in their or any other circumstance one must see the value of that goal in order to organize their time to reach it. An organization or individual that does not value a goal that they are working towards will not put forth the effort, much less discipline their time, in order to ensure that, that goal is reached. That is why it was important for the group that was targeted to identify goals that they were excited about and saw as feasible. With realistic goals, that one personally buys into, then the process of time management does not become a burden but a necessary step that can be embraced while moving towards that goal.

Time management can be a concept that gets thrown around, but one can begin to miss its significance. Psalm 90:12 describes life and the need to grasp its fleeting nature: “Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.” Knowing, experiencing, and witnessing the ‘brevity’ of life is something that is experienced in different ways in different contexts around the world. Regardless of one’s situation one must not take for granted their position in this world and the impact of time management on life and work. How one manages their time affects them individually as well as their community. Life is short but its impact can be generational. That is the paradox about life in relation to time. Life is brief but how it is used and how one’s time is managed during that life will have a significant influence after they are gone. So, like Paul it is best to live wisely and make the most of every opportunity to flourish and lead others to do so as well.

## 9. Attention to Detail

Now Jericho was strongly fortified because of the Israelites—no one leaving or entering.<sup>2</sup> The LORD said to Joshua, “Look, I have handed Jericho, its king, and its fighting men over to you.<sup>3</sup> March around the city with all the men of war, circling the city one time. Do this for six days.<sup>4</sup> Have seven priests carry seven ram’s-horn trumpets in front of the ark. But on the seventh day, march around the city seven times, while the priests blow the trumpets.<sup>5</sup> When there is a prolonged blast of the horn and you hear its sound, have all the people give a mighty shout. Then

the city wall will collapse, and the people will advance, each man straight ahead.”<sup>6</sup> So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant and have seven priests carry seven trumpets in front of the ark of the LORD.”<sup>7</sup> He said to the people, “Move forward, march around the city, and have the armed troops go ahead of the ark of the LORD.” (Joshua 6:1-7)

Depending on one’s context, what details may be taken seriously maybe different from what someone else considers important. There are diverse objectives in different professions, but emphasizing this is important. For example, the journalist may need to have truthful sources, the CPA focuses on numbers lining up for the accounts, and the construction worker must ensure the building materials are correct. One cannot be lazy or dismissive when it comes to details. Another example is that one cannot expect another person whose skill set, and passion is to do embroidery to know and give adequate attention to the details that an accountant would to a tax form or vise-versa. Broadly one must recognize and emphasize details to move forward and be excellent in whatever they do.

Throughout the scriptures God is working in great detail. Nothing is passive or reckless in His plan or direction for His people. Take Joshua and the instructions to overcome Jericho. The directions that were given may seem strange when taken at face value. This situation demanded a detailed strategy in order to overcome the city of Jericho. Now a regular army might have planned to siege the city for a certain amount of time; or they may have developed a strategy to try and scale the walls to create a strategic bulge in the Jericho defenses in order to continue an invasion of the city. However, God operates outside of normal strategies. Thus, Joshua was given a specific plan to overtake the city that was dependent upon him and the people trusting God completely, no matter how they would look. But what is important to understand is that this strategy was not just a call of faith it was also a call to be obedient and do what they were instructed according to the details that had been given to them. God could have

wiped out the city in less than a moment, but he called them to be active in his plan, to be committed to it and apply faith to a real-life challenge. If one, like Joshua, takes seriously their responsibilities in the workplace then they will apply those same principles. How one perceives their work a lot of times determines their approach towards it. If Joshua and the Israelites had a negative perception of their goal to reach the promised land and of the one who had given the directive, then they might have tried something different and failed. In one's workplace, even if it is somewhere that one does not want to be, how one perceives their work in that circumstance can affect how much attention to detail they give to their responsibilities. This goes to a deeper point: if one's job is not asking them to do something unethical, working with integrity is necessary if one perceives the value of work and not just their particular situation.

This goes to another point about whether one desires to just get by or to flourish. If all one wants to do is collect a paycheck and go through the motions because they perceive that their work is not something to take seriously then that is their choice. However, if they have a more mature perception then their approach can change. One's work ethic is directly linked to the skill, or better stated, desire to pay attention to details that effect the overall process and objectives of their profession. That is an ongoing battle in the workplace whether one loves their job or not. Attention to detail takes a consistently disciplined effort. Some items will be missed and overlooked. But that should be the exception not the norm. There can be a lot of factors that influence one's perception towards work that can turn detailed oriented work into passivity such as pay, how one is treated, lack of purpose, insecurity, etc. How one presses through those areas will affect much in their lives and workplace. Those entanglements serve as the distractions that hinder a flourishing work life. Those items if left to fester will interrupt the work of managing

one's family, work, and ultimately self. That non-caring attitude where details, which can impact other macro areas, are ignored will affect any forward movement.

Proverbs 4:26-27 further emphasizes the need to be aware of details and think through the steps that one takes, "Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil." There are multiple directions and decisions that can be detrimental that one can avoid simply by being attentive to the various aspects leading up to that choice or action. This cycles back to what has been discussed about one's perception of their work and, consequently, themselves. And even a step further, their perception of the Imago Dei. If one seriously sees themselves as Image bearers or at the very least see their lives as having value, then attention will be given to the details of their decisions at work. "Is what I am doing leading to flourishing in my life, family and community," is a question that should ring in one's mind if the reality of being an image bearer is or is being seared in their minds and hearts. One ponders their path, to walk a healthy path so they will not be misdirected and get trapped in unethical/immoral patterns. That is as small as working honestly in one's job to living a whole life filled with integrity. The calling since creation to be fruitful and multiply does not stop. Even though Adam and Eve were not attentive to the details of God's instructions to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that does not mean that those whose minds have been awakened by the Spirit should shift responsibility and/or blame and not be attentive also. As their lives demonstrated attention or lack thereof to details can have much broader effects. Their decision led to the fall. Another's decision may lead to a bankrupt organization, unethical practices, aimless cycles of just going through the motions, or nothing of value being pursued or accomplished.

Attention to detail in whatever context is essential. Joshua was given clear details to follow.

It is a reminder among other principles that one must not shirk details in work. God was very specific with Joshua about what was to be done to capture Jericho. They undertook the detailed directions and gained the victory. Part of the *Imago Dei* is detail; from creation to His redemptive story, He is working in purposeful detail. And his people honor Him by taking seriously the tasks and goals that they work towards. Since time is short, which necessitates the need for time management, then one needs to take seriously what they are doing in order to have the greatest impact possible.

## 10. Leadership

<sup>20</sup> Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.<sup>21</sup> "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."<sup>22</sup> "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered.<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."<sup>24</sup> When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. <sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,<sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—<sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28)

Leadership rounds out the essential/soft skills program training. Not everyone may see themselves as leaders but in some capacity leadership skills or awareness will be important. How one functions as a leader should flow out of who they are, not what one is told it should be. Greater still, one should look at the greatest example of leadership in Jesus. As a leader Jesus displayed many qualities and gave different examples to follow. The most significant was the servant leader model. In the above passage Jesus calls out his disciples following an incident with two other disciples and their mom.

He first describes the behavior of worldly leaders dominating nature and approach to leadership (v.25), but, he teaches them that they must not follow that pattern (v.26). After highlighting the negative he then gives them a higher standard of leadership to pursue (v.26b-v.27). This is capped off by the greatest example of leadership, service, and sacrifice: which is Himself (v.28). By looking at leadership from that prism one can accomplish two essential objectives: 1) provide a positive platform for this soft skill and broader leadership development and 2) provide a strong path into the gospel. This fact of service and humility as indispensable components of leadership and Christ's example is further depicted in Philippians 2:3-4: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but, also to the interests of others." That snaps a rooted problem in every person and even more so in potential leaders; to turn away from selfish goals for the good of others. Yes, as individuals one desires to grow and flourish. However, if that is all that one wants, then something is missing as a leader. Jesus simple words hit to the heart at the beginning of verse 26 of chapter 20: "Not so with you..." With them that is to be expected. But with you: my followers and friends, you are to walk a different path. And if that is the path that Jesus modeled for them and taught them, then it obviously must be superior to other methods and approaches to leadership. One must be careful and not assume that Jesus is teaching his people to be timid leaders in their spheres of influence. Jesus never demonstrated timidity, nor did he ever teach that. His call and method of leadership takes immense fortitude. To show humility and strong ethical leadership at the same time is not a skill that a lot of leaders possess. However, that is the standard that was being given by Christ and what Paul further magnified in Philippians as he worked to follow that same leadership model as an apostle.

With that first component that Jesus emphasized in Matthew 20 one is better able to

effectively lead in various situations. For example, Acts 2:14 follows the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Many people were wondering what was happening, “And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others mocking said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’”<sup>25</sup> If no one had stepped up to explain what was happening then many assumptions would have continued to be made. But Peter after seeing and being taught the aspects of healthy leadership filled a void. Despite one’s circumstances or position there is an opportunity to step into a void of leadership. No one can say that they do not have that opportunity because they do; whether one does it well or not. Peter stepped into that void or opportunity. Sometimes that is the most important action one can take which is to step up and into those situations where there is a need for salt and light. Peter provided that by also giving clarity and direction to the event that had just taken place. Once one steps up, they have to provide those things. If there is a need for someone in an organization to step up, then the implication is that there is a need to also bring clarity and direction. Acts 2:14-37 records Peter giving that clarity. He explained the scriptures in connection with what they all had just experienced and witnessed. That clarity was necessary before he began to give direction in Acts 2:38, “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” That direction was followed up with a further course of action in Acts 2:39-41. Next it led to transformed action in Acts 2:42-47 that records a community that, “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching,” “had all things in common,” and “praising God and having favor with all the people.” Healthy leadership brings that clarity, direction, and transformation that one observes in that chapter. Actions that Peter was able to more effectively undertake because his leadership had first been refined by Christ’s superior example.

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<sup>25</sup> Acts 2:12-13

With the foundation of leadership that Jesus demonstrated, one can begin to take on even more complex situations. Two scenarios, one that was recorded in Acts 15 during the Jerusalem council to deal with false teaching and Galatians 2:11-14 when Paul confronted Peter regarding some unethical behavior called for a more confrontational approach of leadership. After discussion and debate regarding circumcision in Acts 15 Peter put a cap on the dispute: “Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. And all the assembly fell silent...”<sup>26</sup> Healthy leadership will have to also be willing to confront challenges to the workplace and community. The arena of sex work needs to be confronted not just by leaders from the outside but by those from within whose hearts and minds are awakened to flourish and lead others to flourish.

The same healthy confrontational attitude was applied by Paul to address Peter/Cephas: But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him...”<sup>27</sup> There are two points to understand here. On a macro level, leaders must always be willing to call-out unethical behavior, even among prominent individuals. Second, leaders must always guard against slipping into biased unethical habits in order to please certain people. Much like politicians who shift in various directions, there are those who did what Cephas did. The same person who saw the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost upon people from various backgrounds had demonstrated an unacceptable level of hypocrisy. But one

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<sup>26</sup> Acts 15:10-12a

<sup>27</sup> Galatians 2:11-13a

should be grateful to have those around them to identify those characteristics. And a humble heart that follows Jesus' model can receive and grow from such criticism and be better equipped to avoid those pitfalls in the future.

The primary objective for the 10 soft-skills training is not so much evangelistic on the front end. However, the admission must be made that there is a desire that there will be those who will be impacted more deeply by the stories and will dive deeper into their meaning and embrace the One who inspired the writings and empowered the figures in the stories. Regardless, seeds will be planted for positive personal transformation leading to a greater sense of hope and flourishing. There are many factors that can hinder forward movement within the group including the recent emergence of covid that has adversely affected their community. Even with those factors present, those involved with engaging this group will continue to prayerfully trust that God will do a special work amongst this group and more broadly within their community.

Following the training a short survey was given to the group. 29 women from the sex work community were part of the training. The goal was to get at least 15 to 20 who would respond to the questions. Due to the adverse situation that many of the women find themselves the attempt was made to create a concise non-intimidating questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of only 6 questions with 3 to 4 responses (see Appendix 4) for each question. As a reminder the immediate objective that this work is aiming for in serving this population is to build hope that may lead to something more in the future. Building that hope by integrating Biblically based soft-skills, will lead to initial steps of liberation from the life of sex work. The questions that are posed to them will aspire to ascertain if the training is providing that hope toward liberation. The questions were posed a few months following the training rather than immediately after. The desire was to give them time to process and begin to think of opportunities where they can apply

the concepts. This is a long-term process, and the desire continues to be transformational not just the passing along of information.

The training that was conducted involved 29 women in a South Asian city in January 2020. The writer lead the training alongside two other men who helped with translation. Each of the co-trainers represented two other NGOs/non-profits based in that area, SPAD and Rural Unit for Health and Family Welfare. The training took place over a 3-hour period. A survey was administered to the group in September and October of 2020. That time between the training and the survey was meant to give the participants time to process and share. Of the 29 women who participated in the training 20 responded.

The objective of the survey questions was to ascertain if this training or others like it that integrates Biblical concepts with further skill training can be a legitimate first step towards building hope to move out of that environment, flourish, and potentially be a further catalyst for others as they ultimately pursue their dreams and goals. The evaluation of the training aimed to identify those potentialities.

There were six questions posed to the women. Only six questions were presented to be non-intimidating and to pinpoint if the training was understandable, was there value in the training and if they find enough value in the training to share it with others? The questions and responses are listed below. Appendix 5 also has the responses in a different format:

1. Did you understand the training you received about the 10 skills?  
80% answered: “Yes” I understood  
20% answered: “I understood some of it”
2. What did you think about the training?  
70% said: that “it was very helpful”  
30% said: “it was a little helpful”
3. Do you feel the training has helped you to think about new opportunities?  
75% said: “very helpful”

25% said: “a little helpful”

4. Have you made any plans about future goals and opportunities after the training? 25% said: “a lot of plans”  
65% said: “some plans”  
10% said: “no plans”
5. Have you shared any of what you learned with other people?  
15% said: they “shared with 1 to 3 others”  
10% shared with “3 to 4 people”  
60% shared with “4 or more”  
15% shared with “no one”
6. Do you feel that the training can help you to reach your hopes and dreams for the future?  
90% said “yes”  
10% responded “maybe”.

By taking those responses one can see that the training had a positive impact and influence on their thinking. The majority stated that they had a general understanding of the material leading to other sections of the group stating that they found it helpful and that plans, to some extent, had been formed. As demonstrated, there were only 6 questions. The objective was to ascertain as much information about their perspectives of the training as possible without it feeling overwhelming. For example, question one builds into the second question. The first question asks if they had an understanding of the training. If they did not understand it then the purpose of the training would have been lost. With the majority understanding it the next question encouragingly saw that a majority who then responded thought that it was helpful. From there the questionnaire digs a little deeper towards the goal of the program/project to determine if initial steps are forming in their thought process. If the desire is not there (question 3) then the effort to begin forming plans will not be either (question 4). Questions 5 and 6 highlight other specific items. Question 5 is to measure if this training can be or encourage the participants to be catalysts who will be able and willing to speak into others in their community. That is important

because it is essential that the training is structured in such a way that it can be passed onto others or at the very least encourages the participants to invite others into new opportunities that they are moving towards. The final question echoes questions 1-4 but it is important because everyone has dreams and desires for their lives. It is one thing to have a training that helps to spark hope. The next level is to establish whether this is helping them along a pathway that inspires them to pursue something that truly fulfills them, because they are Image bearers of God capable and deserving of that kind of opportunity.

That then allows for further steps to be taken following this building block. As one of the participants stated after the training, “It’s the first time someone has given us lessons about how to get out of this lifestyle rather than just how to be safe in it through some sexual education training.” Planting the seed of hope through a training that integrates scripture with varied skills training and igniting their imagination for a new future for themselves and their children is a significant step.

## CHAPTER V

## OUTCOMES AND FUTURE STEPS: RE-IMAGINING HOW TO ENGAGE THE SEX WORK AND TRAFFICKING COMMUNITY IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE WORLD

Engaging this population has its challenges due to the stereotypes, abuse, fear, and the closed off nature of their community, as it is with most ministry to unique social and people groups. However, with that challenge comes the opportunity to impact those who may otherwise have been ignored. With that in mind, the research question that has been addressed is: Can an integrated Biblical and professional skills training provide hope for a group of women to begin the process of exiting the voluntary and/or forced profession of sex work in a South Asian context? The approach that was adopted through this research and ministry effort aimed to first develop an integrated Biblically based skills training. That training was detailed in chapter 4 and it incorporated 10 soft skills coupled with specific Biblical stories to further highlight the skills (see Appendix 1). This accomplished two goals which was to expose them to foundational Biblical truth, which many if not all were not familiar with, and outline skills that they may have used in the past in some capacity. That was done while defining them systematically within a Biblical context. The next part of the question is to ‘provide hope.’ The training involved the defining of skills that can be applied in a new context of their interest. At the beginning of the training, they were asked about new opportunities that they would like to explore or get more training in. Responses ranged from tailoring, salon, working as an advocate for their community, or any other tenable job to just earn some new stream of income. Using those responses, the skills training that they would go on to receive could be contextualized further; thus, igniting the hope that there can be something better and beyond their current situation. The actual exiting

process is beyond the scope of this research, but it is explored further along in this chapter. The framework of a one-day training was to both reveal the possibility of and provide hope for a new direction.

There were further reasons (technical, theological, moral/ethical and pastoral) why this approach and training was adopted. It is a complex community with a complex history; but by contextualizing and applying Biblical principles with other important concepts the goal of providing hope and potentially exiting can be reached.

### 1. Technical

The world of sex work can be very convoluted in how it is defined and understood. Early in the first chapter the research defined, through the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, different terms for how to understand the issue more clearly on an international scale. The arena of contemporary or modern-day slavery involves different terminology, organizations, and governments that attempt to grapple with the problem. One must be careful to appropriately define the issue or target group to formulate an appropriate strategy. Clearly defining and then moving forward is essential. Even now governments and NGOs are only able to identify .5% of all human trafficking victims around the world every year!<sup>1</sup> For the context that is being targeted in this research the population can be identified as being those who have been coerced in some way into that lifestyle “forced sexual exploitation”<sup>2</sup> or a term that was proposed in the first chapter, “self-imposed exploitation,” where one willing chooses to go into an industry such as

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<sup>1</sup> Boutros, Victor, Christine L. Buchholz, and John Richmond. “Human Trafficking: What can we do about it?” May 21, 2021, <https://cslewisinstitute.org/Rescue>

<sup>2</sup> Kristine, Lisa. “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery.” Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, 2017, pp. 1-65., doi:10.7312/kara15846-003

sex work. The context of the training and the confidentiality of the participants took these factors into consideration. If the target group was forced marriages, child soldiers, or other aspects of forced labor then the training that was developed would have looked different to take into consideration their context. But the goal with this group is to highlight and provide a hope through training that can help them to flourish in a new profession. This is done more effectively because there is a correct understanding of who is being reached.

## 2. Biblical/Theological

From the beginning there had to be a strong theological foundation for what was going to be done. Throughout the scriptures one can read the events of how God has moved through history and the actions of his redeemed people in the context of his redemptive plan. Those actions involved the application of specific skills or ‘soft-skills’ that allowed them to continue flourishing. Skills such as leadership, attention to detail, communication, interpersonal skills, etc. were all significant (see appendix 1). The Bible touches on various issues and topics. How to function and flourish in adverse situations is a theme that can be found throughout the Bible. Passing those truths onto a population of sex workers can be a significant tool that they can potentially utilize moving forward. Especially as one considers the next step of moving towards a new profession or vocation. As stated, the first part of the training did not include the diffusion of information but asking them what their interests were. The stories that weave through the training are aimed to instigate their thinking and imagination towards a restored relationship with God through Christ, a holistic career, or at the very least, for that exit (new job) to transform into a long-term opportunity. Taking advantage of those opportunities is an aim of the training with the greater goal that they will not stop there but move forward and see the God who created them

to enjoy Him, to participate in work that honors Him and gives purpose to His Image bearers: “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Moral/Ethical

The church should be speaking into and impacting every layer of society. When articles, like what was referenced in chapter 4 from the Harvard Civil Liberties-Civil Law Review, that defend the need to legalize prostitution emerge, the church is in a unique position to offer another perspective. However, that is a sensitive argument. Those on both sides of the aisle want to see those who are in sex work empowered; whether they choose it or are coerced. That desire for them to have dignity and value is very ethical and worthy. The issue is, on the other hand, is if that empowerment rejects the reality of the *Imago Dei*? Then there is the danger of slipping into something that will not be empowering but, ultimately, degrading. There is a deep desire to flourish within everyone which is the calling of every person born in the Image of God; no matter if that desire is being suffocated in a degrading situation. The hope that is being targeted should point to an exit of the profession and subsequently an exit from the mindset and condition that accepts that as a norm.

### 4. Pastoral

Serving and empowering the target group is the objective of this training. Connecting to their needs and desires on a surface level (new profession and life) is a key objective of the training. Connecting to those deeper felt needs that may involve psychological trauma, anxiety

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<sup>3</sup> Colossians 3:17

about the future and spiritual needs is an ongoing process. Part of the process of attempting to connect to those needs is also depicted further in this chapter. Any outreach with this group or similar group may need to consider the hard questions that they wrestle with on a deeper personal level that cannot be necessarily addressed through the training that this project has presented. However, there can be steps taken that open the door to those relationships and conversations that this training aimed to do; by starting conversations and exploring potential plans. One pastoral approach with this group is to just listen, be available, hear their stories, listen to their dreams, and find ways to get involved that are appropriate for their situation. The pastoral aspect of engaging this group will be a significant part of any future strategy as they move forward; while, also, seeing other layers of their community impacted.

The training aimed to highlight specific skills while also integrating and introducing scripture in a way that was not confrontational. In addition, as the survey and some key commits depicted, the majority found the training to be valuable in helping them to process new opportunities to move forward (see Appendix 5). This approach may be more effective over the long-term. The desire is to help them move out of that life as soon as possible by first igniting a sense of hope that may have not been there before. However, just giving some money or pulling them out and placing them into some new situation without adequate tools and skills (soft or other tangible) may not necessarily minimize the potential to fall back into that lifestyle. As soon as the money runs out or if something adverse occurs at the place where they are living then it may be easy to turn back to the old patterns. The usefulness of this training is that it helps them to see (hope) and take those first steps with them included. Their dreams and desires are not dismissed but is included at the very beginning as something that can be elevated through the training. The ministry and work that takes place with this group and community will aim to not

only elevate those dreams and possibilities but will also work to make it a sustainable venture that will allow them and their children to flourish.

As far as ministry design, this building block can still be tweaked. There is value to the scriptures being integrated in the discussions and training and it is also essential that some general foundation be given that can provide general tools for growth and development. However, greater sensitivity can be taken to ensure that their specific needs and desires are being met by more contextualized training. Having varied skills to flourish in varied situations is important. But during this first stage or building block more specific skill training could be added to encourage retention of participants or greater relevancy.

### **Perspectives from Partners**

A lot has been stated about the views and responses from the target population. However, it is important that the viewpoints of the NGO partners on the ground are taken into consideration also. Below are six questions that were posed to NGO leaders (3 questions focus on the training and the next 3 focus on the role of the church). The desire and aim here is to include these key individuals in the evaluation process to obtain a clearer understanding about what can be done to move forward. Following each question their responses will be in italics followed by a review of those responses from this writer.

- 1) How do you think the training helped the participants?
  - *It created new interest.*
  - *They seem very happy to see a new training for a way out as discussed-rather than routine hygiene and health precautions associated with their profession.*

At the onset of the training the hope was that they would at the very least find the training intriguing. There was the worry that they would just see the training as just another person and/or group talking about some useless topic. However, the training was meant to connect to a hope that they each have which is to exit that lifestyle/profession. And the fact that there was interest with what was offered confirmed that. Furthermore, it has been shared that they were encouraged by a training that would build platforms to grow and flourish rather than only hygiene precautions that were simply associated with their profession. Hygiene as an end cannot be the only area that is addressed with this population. Being able to open their minds to and provide avenues to move beyond the world of sex work is essential while planting the seeds for spiritual liberation as well.

2) What can be improved?

- *Giving them a larger picture...like what next support or guidance after this program – for those willing to step out.*

Having this set-in place during the first stage of the training would be more helpful. A lot of the focus and attention was placed on simply getting them to the interest and initial understanding phase. In all honesty there was a lot of confidence in what had been developed but there was still a fair amount of uncertainty about whether they would receive it and then want to apply it. In addition, there was the need to survey their desires, dreams, and expectations to help with developing the framework for that next phase. It was very apparent from the beginning of the training that they were interested. But the more concrete steps that were still being developed, pre-covid, should have been ready to be laid out.

3) What should be done moving forward?

- *A plan of support directly or through partnering with another agency to take this forward*

The plan of support is connected to the next phase of this process which is beyond the scope of this research. The partners involved with guiding this training, and the steps following, all understand and respect the importance and impact that the business realm can have on this community and other areas of ministry. How the support looks will be important. The primary aim is to support the furtherance of other tangible skill training. This thesis has outlined the impact of other programs around the world that serve similar communities. Those organizations apply various strategies focused on rescue, starting their own businesses, or rehabilitation. There are similarities in this training to an extent. However, the focus is to pass on relevant skills that they can build hope that can then, potentially, be applied alongside other skills and opportunities. The support that would be given in this context will take the form of 1) providing that further skill training, 2) connect them to new and healthy professional opportunities and 3) meeting the other longer term spiritual and psychological needs of the group through partnerships with churches and separate agencies. At the time of the training, pre-covid, these steps were more easily attainable. It is not out of reach now but weaving those goals with the group will take more time to develop.

- 4) What is the role of the church in India in helping those in the sex work industry?
  - *Not anything with special focus on this group.*
  - *I feel the church is not directly linked to these kind of issues but it can be discussed and see the response whether it can be involved to support such groups prayerfully and lead them to the Lord.*

This is a very sensitive topic for the church around the world. There are strategies that have been put in place and further efforts are being pushed but it is an inexact science. In this context there will be different views about how the church can best engage this situation, directly or indirectly.

However, the important step is to start the conversation. The two emphases of the training to pass along skill training and plant seeds to meet the spiritual deficit are both aims that the church can lead in addressing. In this context or any other there are people within the church who are equipped to provide the tools to engage the needs of those in the sex work and trafficking community. A congregation as small as 5 or 10 could have a significant impact on this population if given a focused direction. But it is key that those in the church are asked about their views. Since this is a very sensitive issue and target group, then it is important that those who are being asked to meet this need are considered in the process. And it may be a situation where the primary tool being utilized is prayer. Prayer is a potent ministry, and it is strengthened when it can be laser focused on specific needs and persons. The church must be more involved in the realities of those in this community to have a more focused prayer ministry. That is likely where the church universal has failed around the world in addressing this burgeoning issue. Prayer has always been the launching pad for any ministry push throughout church history. Maybe that lack of prayer is what has been missing. Even with this training, much emphasis has been placed on the outcomes but not as much emphasis has been placed on the necessity of prayer. Moving forward, that must be more of a focus as well as the primary tool of engagement for the church in dealing with this crisis.

5) What challenges does the church in India face in reaching that population?

- *Likely to attract stiff resistance, accusations and even violence in the pretext that this is a modus operandi for conversion rather than a welfare measure.*
- *I am sure the church may not accept immediately but it takes time to understand and accept them once they come out of that profession.*

There will be inevitable challenges for the church if it chooses to further meet this problem directly rather than passing it along to others. The first comment listed after question 5 is a very important caution to consider in this context. Many times, churches or other Christian organizations that have attempted to serve the “common good” of the community or address social needs have been accused of using that as a platform to “manipulate” those they are targeting into conversion. Religious entities must be careful because of the consequences that they may have to endure due to those potential accusations. On the other hand, this is a social need that must be met. The church has met social needs throughout history amid antagonistic environments. Conversion may be a natural by-product that cannot be avoided in many instances. However, this training and the subsequent steps have been packaged in such a way to not highlight activities that may put the suspicions of conversion at the forefront. The goal is to show love by offering an introductory training that will spark hope for the future. Yes, there are Biblical stories tied in that give greater clarity to those stories. They may want to explore those stories further (which is a significant desire). But in order to respect and protect those partners and the continuation of the program then the process will continue to be packaged in a way that minimizes those suspicions. Dealing with those external challenges will be difficult. Confronting the other barriers that involve embracing this population is another matter. Understanding this population will take time. As with any relationship there must be time invested to know one another’s needs, struggles, history, and dreams. Every culture will approach this population different due to various social mores. As in every context social mores can bend to faith, hope, and love. When that is applied, contextually, then it can transform how one sees their role as the good Samaritan.

6) How can the church work with the government and organizations like yours to reach that population?

- *There better be a primary owner for this vision and project.*
- *Organizations with expertise can help in developing the process/methodology and help in execution.*
- *With the above two in place – Churches may be taken on board – for support through finances, prayers and also volunteers!*
- *At the later stages once they understand that community with the help of NGOs who are already involved can guide to reach out to this community; maybe towards rehabilitative measures.*
- *I feel this is a completely a new area for the church, we need time to understand the community and their needs.*

There are different items to evaluate within these responses, but it gives further insight in how to progress. First, the need for a clear owner for the vision/project. This is key to avoid the potentiality for someone in that context taking the training and just using it for their own personal or organizational publicity rather than serving the target group. Secondly, one must avoid the possibility of this project starting up and not identifying measurable follow through. The reality of Covid has made this much more difficult but not impossible. The goal is that the training and the next steps will be adopted by the primary partners and churches who see the value of utilizing this as an initial step towards engaging that population. Until that were to take place this author would serve as the primary representative and owner to help shield from some of those concerns. Second, further input by others to sharpen the process and long-term impact will be helpful. A significant aim is that the training will take on an organic application. That is

where different organizations and ministries can use a similar approach to get a foothold within that community and develop contextual steps to assist them further to exit that environment. It was further stated that, that would help with churches who may want to then invest further with prayers, finances, and volunteers. That is understandable because one cannot expect a broader commitment without first convincing other stakeholders of the potential for the project. There is a careful balance, however, with wanting the partners to be part of the planning, in regard to the next steps, versus just handing off another program for them to adopt. Communicating the flexible framework moving forward is important while also reaffirming the primary object which is to provide pathways to exit that lifestyle while planting spiritual seeds for deeper transformation.

The deeper spiritual transformation is essential. But rehabilitative measures, as stated in one of the responses, is another area that must be addressed. There are NGOs and others who can provide the expertise to guide in that process. The hope is that the church will not abandon any key responsibilities to other organizations but in some capacity will take ownership of the process and allow others to supplement the work that they spearhead. That may take time and in the short-term the church having a seat at the table may suffice. However, this training, that is heavily influenced by Biblical stories, aims to see the church leading; with those serving in the congregation who have experience in business, counseling, training, etc. understanding how they can, as the body of Christ, participate in this redemptive project. Context is paramount. It may be a sliding scale in different areas regarding how much the church can take that leading role. However, this project aims to lay the groundwork for churches to see how they can be more intentional.

Finally, as shared, this is a new era for the church and there still must be time taken to understand the community better. Speaking with those on the ground it is understandable that the impact of covid has transformed how the church serves its members and engages the community. That is a reality that churches there and around the world must cope with as they analyze their various strategies. This is especially true as they consider other ministry opportunities that are outside the norm. Churches from every geographical context will have to wrestle with those questions in their own way through a Biblical lens. There are still layers that need to be pulled back to better understand and, ultimately, serve this population in this context as well as others. But faith, hope and love are persistent and in time there can be further clarity for the church in this arena of ministry.

### **Steps to Move Forward**

It cannot be lost that one of the central objectives is to plant seeds (1 Corinthians 3:6) that will hopefully be watered and that will grow at some point in the future. Combined with the infusion of healthy principles to flourish in any professional God-honoring work. With this group there are those who either want to obtain a new job and those who desire to team-up with a group to start a new business on their own. They deserve the very best effort when aiding them to work towards that objective. But there are practical steps that can and should be taken to assist them to move from their current situation into new opportunities. It must be noted that this model is organic in nature. The desire is for these individuals to move out of that environment as soon as possible, however, there is no set structure for any of them to immediately move into. If there is not some ‘community center’ for some of them to immediately shift to then how does an effective strategy target these groups and this one in particular? Considering the recent

restrictions that have emerged due to covid-19 and other nefarious entities a lot of what was planned and discussed with partners, will have to be continually adjusted and revisited to ensure safety and effectiveness. Furthermore, the responses from partners that were shared earlier in this section regarding the training has and will also guide any future steps which go beyond what has been discussed throughout this research. With that said, this is what is being proposed thus far:

- 1) Check in with the group through the NGO partners to ascertain availability and continued interest to move forward. (this is especially important due to the impact of covid on maintaining contact with the participants)
- 2) Identify professional entities, NGOs or other agencies that would be willing to either provide them with further specific hard skills training and or immediate work opportunities that match their interest.
- 3) There is a leadership training company that has a base in South Asia who has shown interest to apply their training to this group followed by a possible certificate of completion. This would add to their general toolbox moving forward. (It is important to note that step 2 would continue during this step and the connection with the company could be eliminated as a possibility due to the impact of covid).
- 4) One of the primary partner NGOs specializes in working with small groups to develop business plans and obtain micro-financing loans. This is one option that can be considered by those wanting to start their own business or attach to an existing group who is already with the NGO to connect to their already established operation in some capacity.
- 5) There needs to be measurement of how much time they are beginning to devote to the new opportunity they have decided for themselves. The hope is that their ties to the former profession will be completely severed as soon as possible. However, it is very likely that, that will take time, and some may want to hang on to the former profession.
- 6) In addition, which will be much harder to designate due to the cultural stigma, is identifying Christians in the area who would be willing to walk alongside these groups in some direct or remote capacity (2-3, 4-5, etc.) for encouragement and discipling; to ensure they are receiving a fully transformational experience that targets the deeper felt needs they have. This will also demand exposure to other trauma-based care that can also address PTSD they may inevitably experience. However, that along with much of the above steps will demand patience and care moving forward (as with any commitment towards real and lasting discipleship.)

The steps are meant to be a fluid process. There is the anticipation that there will be adjustments moving forward. But a roadmap has been rolled out that can provide a pathway to help move them towards a re-imagined God-glorifying future.

What should be done moving forward, that specifically relates to the local church, can involve different steps and can be applied to churches across varying cultures. Foremost, the awareness campaigns that are pushed by many smaller or separate entities needs to continue but also move into seminary and broader denominational platforms. Those platforms that are training up future leaders of the church and in turn have significant influence on larger groups of churches can begin to encourage those churches towards identifying and addressing this issue in their communities. Second, church leadership must not be afraid to empower the laity who possess specific skills and contacts, professionally and within the community, to address the detrimental economic, traumatic, and relational struggles that many in the trafficking social group experience. Since effective strategies will be fluid and contextual, depending on location, then it will look different as those local churches mobilize those in the church. That also applies to partnerships with others in the community (government, law enforcement, businesses, non-profits, etc.) to identify and target those various social groups. Third, effective scenario planning must take place that allows those churches to anticipate potential issues locally (ie. Migration, economic changes, governmental disintegration) that could lead to more trafficking or instigate already existing hotspots versus just being reactive.

Throughout this writing the attempt has been made to answer the question: Can an integrated Biblical and professional skills training provide hope for a group of women to begin the process of exiting the voluntary and/or forced profession of sex work in a South Asian context? It must be highlighted that the goal is to provide hope as the scriptures are integrated into the skills training. It is not anyone's place to force them into any direction. They must be given the love and trust to make their own decision. It can be determined that they are forming a greater sense of hope following the responses from the training and subsequent steps that have

been outlined which aligns with the central thesis: An integrated Biblically based soft skills training can provide hope for a group of women in the South Asian sex industry to begin moving towards new opportunities. This writer and the other trainers had the opportunity to observe hope forming. That first step of hope can lead to liberation spiritually and from a degraded profession. As has been stated, this is a long-term endeavor for this group and for other future partners; discipleship is hard, and this is no different. What the Father desires and what the heart of the believer should long for is that if one of them looks off some cliff of hopelessness and despair they will turn to the Savior Jesus Christ. The one who is ready to embrace them with gracious agape love. And may the church be willing to walk with them towards them at the cliff as the hands and feet of the Savior King and say there is hope.

## APPENDIX A: SOFT SKILLS TOPIC LIST

<b>The Skill</b>	<b>Bible story/Passage</b>	<b>Additional Scripture</b>
Communication	1 Samuel 20:18-39 Jonathan warns David	Ephesians 4:29
Teamwork	Exodus 17:8-14 Aaron & Hur hold Moses' Arms	Ecclesiastes 4:9
Adaptability	Jeremiah 29:4-7 The coming exile	Philippians 4:11-13
Problem-Solving	Nehemiah 4:16-20 Builder plan of defense	Proverbs 3:5-6
Creativity	Exodus 35:26-35 Work on the Tabernacle	Ephesians 2:10
Interpersonal Skills	Genesis 50:15-21 Joseph shows kindness to his brothers	Luke 6:31
Time Management	Ephesians 5:15-17 Written while Paul was in prison	Psalm 90:12
Leadership	Matthew 20:20-28 Jesus teaches about humility	Philippians 2:3-4
Attention to detail	Joshua 6:1-7 Instructions for taking Jericho	Proverbs 4:26
Work Ethic	Genesis 1:26-28 Work established by God	Colossians 3:23

## APPENDIX B: TEACHING POINTS AND HOW TO STEPS

### Communication (Jonathan warns David: 1 Samuel 20:18-39)

- Communication builds relationships
  - Stronger relationships lead to more trust and productivity
- Helps us to make wiser decisions because we are more informed

How to application: Whatever your profession ask questions, be willing to learn, make an effort to get to know your co-worker(s)

### Teamwork (Aaron & Hur hold Moses' Arms: Exodus 17:12-24)

- It is difficult to be successful alone
- We were created for community
  - We saw the importance of community in previous skills

How to application: Ask those around you: friends and family how you can help them; be willing to ask for advice or guidance

### Adaptability (The coming exile: Jeremiah 29:4-7)

- We will meet challenging/adverse situations
  - We can choose to adapt for success or allow the circumstances to overwhelm us

How to application: When situations change or become more difficult, think how you can maximize your strengths and gifts to flourish personally and bless your environment

### Problem-Solving (Builders plan of defense: Nehemiah 4:16-20)

- Consider involving others when facing problems
- Problems should be viewed as an opportunity
- Utilize your strengths and gifts when confronting problems

How to application: Think about the goal(s) you want to accomplish and list ways for how you can address the obstacle in order to reach that goal.

### Creativity (Work on the Tabernacle: Exodus 35:26-35)

- We each are created with unique gifts
- A creative mind must be willing to look beyond what has been done in order to accomplish something new and significant.

How to application: Think about your passions and desires and list ideas about how to build on those passions.

### Interpersonal skills (Joseph shows kindness to his brothers: Genesis 50:15-21)

- The golden rule-If we follow that principle our lives, relationships, and work will be transformed.

- It is difficult to move forward when we are in constant conflict with others (ie. Joseph)

How to application: Apply the golden rule to your relationships and work then you will observe the transformation.

**Time Management (Written while Paul was in prison:Ephesians 5:15-17)**

- No matter your circumstance the one constant is time.
  - View it as a resource to be used
- Every moment of time is an opportunity to move forward, stand still, or move backwards.

How to application: Set clear, achievable goals daily, monthly, or yearly. In addition, making a schedule the matches your goals and desires.

**Attention to detail (Instructions for taking Jericho: Joshua 6:1-7)**

- When we ignore details its more difficult to reach our end goal(s).
- Details or the small things usually build the foundation for greater accomplishments.

How to application: Think about something you are working towards and write out the steps.

**Leadership (Jesus teaches about humility: Matthew 20:20-28)**

- Leadership centered in service and humility
- Lead from Love

How to application: Identify where you are as a leader (family, job, community); ask yourself how you can apply the principles of service, humility and love.

**Work Ethic (Genesis 1:26-28)**

- Created in God's Image
- v.28-Since the beginning God gave men and women a purpose to work

How to application: Think about your gifts /strengths and begin working to build on those areas

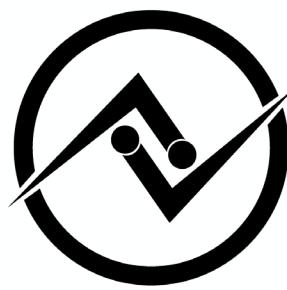
## APPENDIX C: SOFT SKILLS SYMBOLS



LEADERSHIP



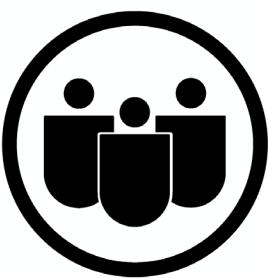
CREATIVITY



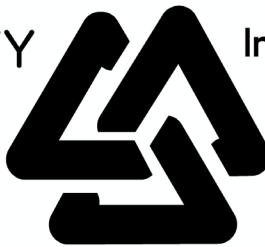
Interpersonal Skills



TEAMWORK



WORK ETHIC



Adaptability



TIME MANAGEMENT



COMMUNICATION



Problem-Solving



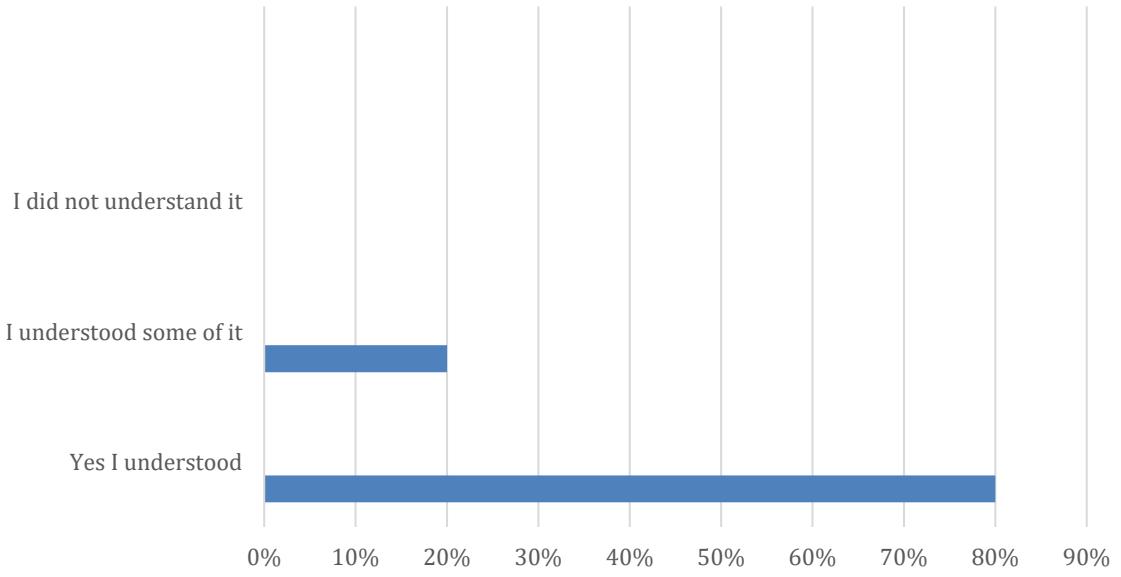
ATTENTION TO DETAIL

## APPENDIX D: SURVEY QUESTIONS

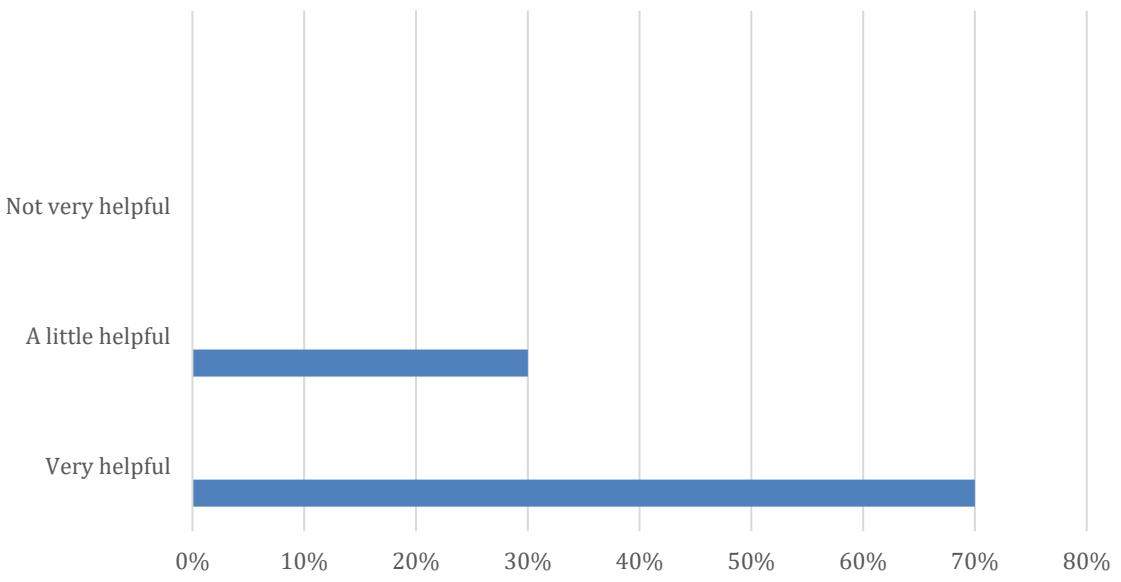
- 1) Did you understand the training you received about the 10 skills?
  - a. Yes, I understood
  - b. I understood some of it
  - c. I did not understand it
  
- 2) What did you think about the training?
  - a. Very helpful
  - b. A little helpful
  - c. Not very helpful
  
- 3) Do you feel the training has helped you to think about new opportunities?
  - a. Very helpful
  - b. A little helpful
  - c. Not very helpful
  
- 4) Have you made any plans about future goals and opportunities after the training?
  - a. A lot of plans
  - b. Some plans
  - c. No plans
  
- 5) Have you shared any of what you learned with other people?
  - a. 1 to 3
  - b. 3 to 4
  - c. 4 or more
  - d. none
  
- 6) Do you feel that the training can help you to reach your hopes and dreams for the future?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Maybe
  - c. No

## APPENDIX E: SURVEY RESULTS

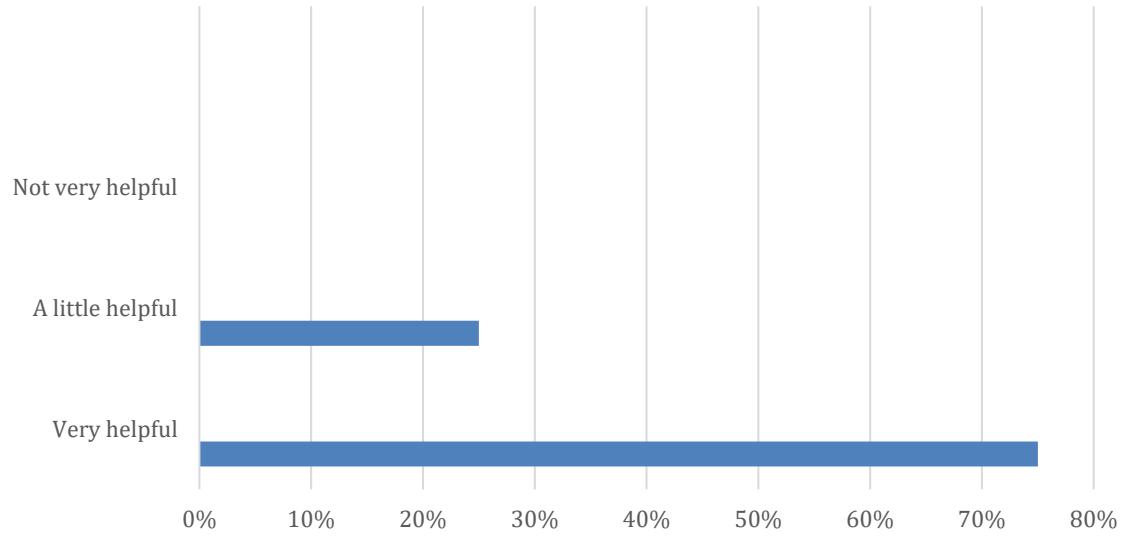
## 1. Did you understand the Training that you received?



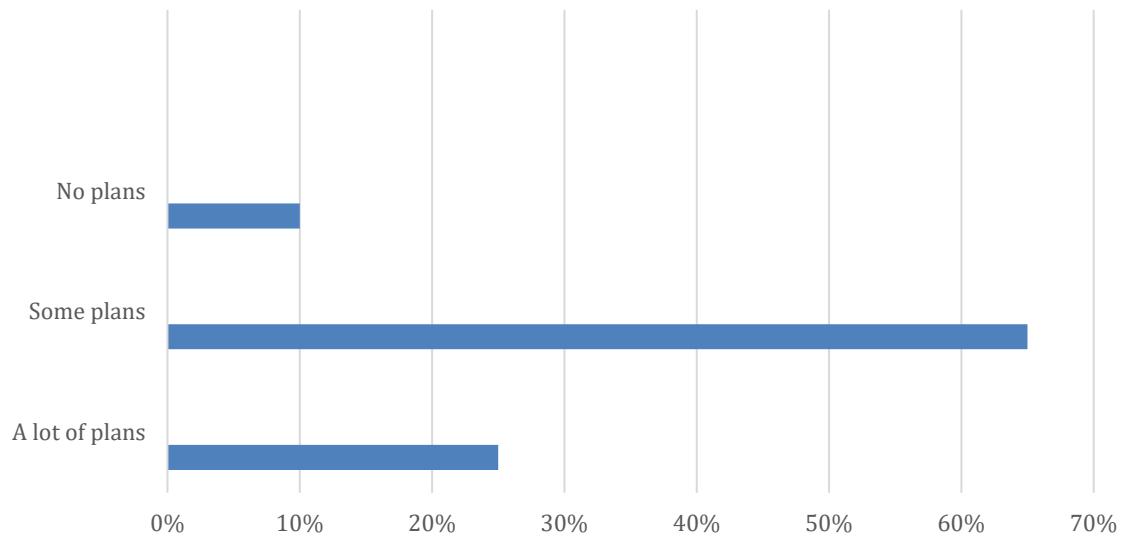
## 2. What did you think about the training?



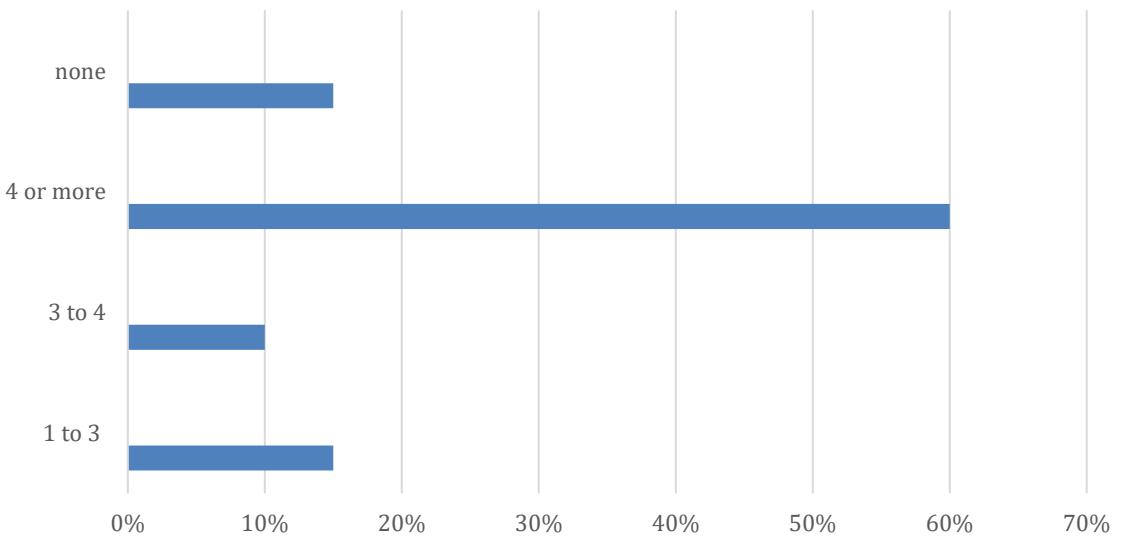
3. Do you feel like the training has helped you to think about new opportunities?



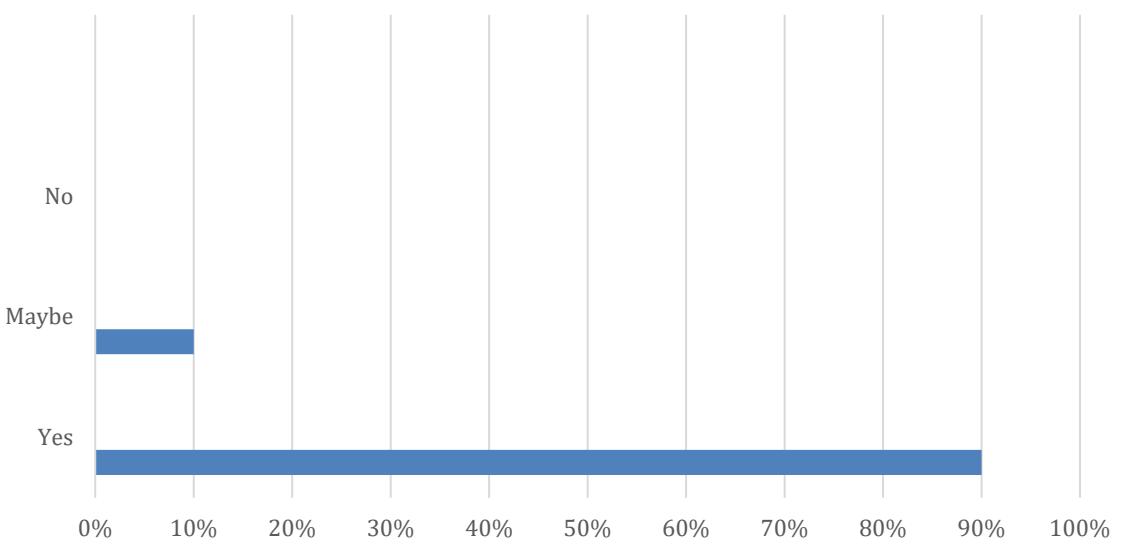
4. Have you made any plans about future goals and opportunities after the training?



5. Have you shared any of what you have learned with other people?



6. Do you feel that the training can help you to reach your hopes and dreams for the future?



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### Vita

Jonathan Morton was born in Nashville, TN and has worked in various settings within the US, Mexico, and South Asia. He earned his B.S. in Sociology from Middle Tennessee State University and his MACM from Dallas Theological Seminary. Jonathan is a DMIN candidate with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the Workplace Theology, Ethics, and Leadership program with an expected completion in 2022. His wife and two children reside in the US serving in their local church and ministering to those from various communities locally and abroad.